



American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

2023 Conference Proceedings

**October 3rd –6th
Hilton Lexington Downtown
Lexington, Kentucky**

Editors

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American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

Vision Statement

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) is dedicated to the belief that lifelong learning contributes to human fulfillment and positive social change. We envision a more humane world made possible by the diverse practice of our members in helping adults acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed to lead productive and satisfying lives.

Mission Statement

The mission of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) is to provide leadership for the field of adult and continuing education by expanding opportunities for adult growth and development, unifying adult educators, fostering the development and dissemination of theory, research, information, and best practices; promoting identity and standards for the profession; and advocating relevant public policy and social change initiatives.

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Message From E. Paulette Isaac-Savage *Past President 2023-2024*

Publication of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference Proceedings

I am excited that the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) continues to build its publication library by disseminating conference proceedings. The 2023 Annual Conference was historical for AAACE. It was the first time we hosted both a virtual and in-person conference. Our in-person conference meeting was held in Lexington, KY. The proceedings represent papers from both venues.

This year's conference theme, "Informing, Reforming, and Transforming: The Vital Role of Adult Education in Challenging Times," challenged us to examine adult education from a different lens and consider new opportunities for research and practice that support our motto of *transforming lives and communities*. The following proceedings will equip you with the information and tools you need to chart new territories and make a difference in the lives of adult learners. They are replete with diverse perspectives, research findings, and practices that "create an incredibly rich pool from which to learn and grow."

These proceedings would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the AAACE Proceedings Committee. I want to thank Lisa R. Brown (Chair), Audrey Ayers, Trenton Ferro, Laura Holyoke, Adam McClain, and Pamela McCray for their tireless efforts to provide us with a quality product that will be useful for years to come.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we hope you enjoy reading about the various topics. As you reflect on the vital role of adult education in challenging times, consider how the topics within these pages can aid you in informing, reforming, and transforming the communities in which you work and the field of adult education.

Sincerely,

E. Paulette Isaac-Savage

E. Paulette Isaac-Savage, EdD
AAACE
Imme

Editors' Notes

Dear Reader,

It is our distinct pleasure, and with great anticipation, we present the fourth conference proceedings for the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education 2023 conference. These proceedings for the annual conference provide a platform to highlight the valuable presentations made at the meeting and virtually, which are now being published and cataloged in ERIC. The proceedings reflect a combination of presentations featuring empirical research and practical application within the field of adult and continuing education. As editors and committee members, we thank all stakeholders, including the board of directors, members, staff, sponsoring partners, and authors. We are grateful to you, for without you, these publications and conference proceedings would not be a reality.

To the board of directors, we say thank you for your vision to institute such an endeavor and for entrusting us with the opportunity to compile and edit the corresponding year's conference proceedings for AAACE. We are truly grateful for this, which was an honor for each of us.

To the illustrious contributors to the conference proceedings, we extend our gratitude. The conference proceedings would not be a reality without your hard work, dedication, attention to detail, creativity, and ambition. You have provided a platform that serves as an academic inspiration and a source reflecting a conglomerate of topics. Your contributions to theory and practice will benefit scholars and practitioners and align with the overarching theme of AAACE. We are grateful and say thank you!

To members, we thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise at this year's conference. We strongly encourage all conference presenters in attendance virtually or in-person to submit a manuscript for the upcoming year's conference proceedings. Your knowledge, experience, and ability are worth sharing to inspire and empower other scholars and practitioners in adult and continuing education. We hope you enjoy reading the conference proceedings.

Thank you,
Lisa R. Brown, Ph. D.



Conference Proceedings Chair, 2022-2024
Committee Members 2023-24:

Dr. Audrey Ayers

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Oppositional Gaze: Disrupting the Controlling Images of Black Women's Development in Film

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Abstract: As a pedagogical tool, film can help adult learners understand diverse narratives and disrupt ideology domination, specifically regarding Black women. Despite the increase in visibility in Hollywood, Black women remain negatively depicted in films. The negative depictions often minimize or simply ignore the development or self-actualization of their characters. The purpose was to examine the depictions and adult development of Black women's characters in American films. Based on our oppositional gaze of 12 Black female-led American films, four themes emerged: #noBlackgirlmagic, the transition from object-to-subject, the lies you tell, and hair it is. Practical implications for educators across the adult and higher education landscapes are discussed.

Keywords: Black women, film, adult development, oppositional gaze

The quality and quantity of Black women have progressed in American film. However, an oppositional gaze is still needed to critically interrogate images, differences, gaps, and connections that reinforce ideologies of domination. Oppositional gaze is a space of resistance where spectators critically examine the “absence of meaningful Black representation” in mass media, including film (hooks, 1992/2014, p. 117). The US media and entertainment industry (M&E) provides us with countless hours of entertainment through its subsector - film. This visual art form entertains and educates us.

Most importantly, film shapes and/or reinforces historical and cultural beliefs and attitudes about an individual or a group of individuals, notably Black women (Andrews & McClain, 2022). The American film landscape has made improvements toward diversity and inclusion of Black women. Sadly, the industry continues to perpetuate caricatures and racist images of Black women that frequently minimize or simply ignore their characters' developmental milestones or self-actualization. In this study, our goal was to examine the depictions and adult development of Black women's characters in American films. The next sections will provide a review of literature related to Black women in American film. For this empirical study, the literature review is situated within three areas: American film, Black women in American film, and adult development.

Literature Review

American Film

In 1891, Thomas Edison introduced the concept of a motion picture in the US; however, in 1895, the Lumière brothers aired the first motion picture to a mass audience in Paris (Science and Media Museum, 2020). The author asserts that the US became the principal player in the global film industry during World War I and continues to show its dominance. According to the United States International Trade Administration (n.d.), in 2022, the US generated the largest earnings in the M&E industry with more than \$660 billion of the \$2 trillion global market. It incorporates numerous subdivisions like film, television, and streaming content. While these earnings have

not reached pre-pandemic years, M&E leaders are aggressively modifying their business and financial models to realize growth and set their institutions up for future success (Harrison, 2022). Sadly, they lack the same tenacity when addressing inequities, notably in their film division. This viewpoint was noted in a recent McKinsey & Company study in which Dunn et al. (2021) suggested that if the film industry determinedly dealt with *just* the racial prejudices, it could yield M&E leaders an additional \$10 billion in earnings. However, these aggressive steps mean narrowing the representation gap for Black talents who work behind the screens (e.g., directors, writers, producers) and funding more Black-led films, such as those with Black female protagonists.

Black Women in American Film

Film is one of the most important social and cultural artifacts that embody the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of society, particularly against minoritized groups, more specifically Black women (hooks, 1992/2014). Historically, Black women were seldom cast in film. When opportunities arose, they were often depicted as “controlling images” like mammy, welfare queen, sapphire, and jezebel. Controlling images “make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Collins, 2001, p. 69). The controlling images of Black women are ever-present in contemporary American film.

For example, McTaggart et al. (2021) revealed that Black female leads (39.6%) in family films were more likely to be depicted as unemployed than White female leads (10.4%). This description perpetuates the welfare queen trope, in which Black women are seen as lazy mothers who abuse the welfare system (Brockell, 2019). In addition, Black female leads were nearly 14% more sexualized than White female leads (9%) in family films. This finding enforces the dominant ideology that Black women are jezebels or sexual aggressors, which gives individuals the justification to objectify and dehumanize them (hooks, 1992/2014). Optimistically, McTaggart et al. (2021) point out that Black female leads in family films were depicted as *smarter* than their White counterparts (54% and 44%, respectively). Also, Black women were more likely to represent an employee in a STEM occupation than White women (14.3% compared to 9.6%). Although the quality and quantity of film roles for Black women have progressed, they are often cast as characters with linear stages of development (Andrews & McClain, 2022).

Adult Development

Adult development is often equated to change and growth. Adult development is a dynamic and complex process encompassing meaning-making and reasoning (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; McClain, 2019). Traditionally, scholarship on adult development was developed from a White male perspective and psychological-centered; however, this perspective was limited to understanding psychological development and life transitions across various societies and cultures (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Wheeler et al., 2002). While more contemporary work has offered richer perceptions of adult development across sociocultural differences, this awareness often does not translate effectively to the portrayal of Black women’s developmental learning on the cinematic stage.

Even though Black women live at the intersection of diverse microcultures, the portrayals of their experiences in film lack complexity (hooks, 1992/2014, 1995; Tapp, 2021). We argue three persuasive points. First, the lack of complexity in film diminishes or disregards Black women’s

adult development and learning. Second, it continues to perpetuate superficial and stereotypical depictions that fail to capture the multidimensional experiences, oppositions, and growth that Black women go through. Lastly, we argue that lack of complexity distorts their characterizations, which limits diverse narratives and deprives spectators of the opportunity to learn from and connect with the rich journey of their characters.

Research Design

Theoretical Framework

In this film analysis, we utilized Black feminist thought (BFT) as our theoretical framework to critically gaze at Black women's depiction and developmental milestones in American film. Our rationale lies within the tenets of BFT. First, it inherently is Black women-centered and recognizes that their experiences intersect across numerous social identities (Collins, 1991/2022). In addition, it empowers Black women to be resistant, which involves deliberate intellectual efforts that combat hegemonic ideologies. Lastly, BFT creates a critical awareness that licenses Black women to self-define and self-value their Black womanhood.

Data Collection

To be included in the film analysis, the data needed to meet four criteria: 1) American film with a Black female protagonist, 2) release years, 3) adult development, and 4) film of choice. The initial criterion was established based on our familiarity with American films featuring Black female protagonists, yielding a total of 61 visual data. Our second criterion narrowed the focus to American films with Black female protagonists released between 2010 and 2020, yielding 54 visual data points. The third criterion, focusing on adult development and the evolution of Black female protagonists' roles, led to the elimination 31 films, leaving us with 23 American films for analysis. Lastly, we narrowed the films based on the researchers' choices with an emphasis on "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2014, p. 42). Based on the film of choice, 12 American films with Black female protagonists emerged. Table 1 illustrates data that were compiled from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb): title, release year, running time, director, and writer. While beyond the nature of this analysis, it would be neglectful of us not to underscore the underrepresentation of Black women as directors of these films. Black men were more than four times as likely to control the films' artistic aspect than Black women (75% compared to 16.6%).

Also, Black women were less likely to be writers (30.4%) than Black men (34.7%). But they were more likely to be writers than White women (13.0) and White men (21.7%).

Findings

This study identified four themes: #noBlackgirlmagic, transitioning from object to subject, hair it is, and the lies you tell emerged:

#noBlackgirlmagic

The Black Girl Magic mentality is a double-edge sword. Although empowering, it implies that Black women are required to magically manifest strength and suppress emotions in the face of adversities (Porter & Byrd, 2021). In this study, #noBlackgirlmagic emerged to challenge the problematic belief that Black women are seen as mythical beings who are impervious to life's challenges. Ali, "What Men Want," was shown as a superhuman character because she was able to navigate through a White male-dominated workplace as the token Black woman sports agent

and handle the strain of invisibility and hypervisibility. The finding, like previous studies (e.g., Porter & Byrd, 2021), suggests that the Black Girl Magic mentality continues to contribute to Black women's mental health and health disparities.

Table 1

American Films with Black Female Protagonists, IMDb (n=12)

Film	Release Year	Running Time (mins)	Director (RaceGender)	Writer (RaceGender)
For Colored Girls	2010	134	Tyler Perry (BM)	Tyler Perry (BM), Ntozake Shange (BF)
Pariah	2011	86	Dee Rees (BF)	Dee Rees (BF)
Sparkle	2012	116	Salim Akil (BM)	Mara Brock Akil (BF), Joel Schumacher (WM), Howard Roseman (WM)
1982	2013	90	Tommy Oliver (BM)	Tommy Oliver (BM)
Dear White People	2014	108	Justin Simien (BM)	Justin Simien (BM)
Almost Christmas	2016	111	David E. Talbert (BM)	David E. Talbert (BM)
Girls' Trip	2017	122	Malcolm D. Lee (BM)	Erica Rivinoja (WF), Kenya Barris (BM), Tracy Oliver (BF)
Widows	2018	129	Steve McQueen (BM)	Gillian Flynn (WF), Steve McQueen (BM), Lynda La Plante (WF)
Queen & Slim	2019	132	Malcolm D. Lee (BM)	Lena Waithe (BF), James Frey (WM)
What Men Want	2019	123	Adam Shankman (WM)	Tina Gordon (BF), Peter Huyck (WM), Alex Gregory (WM)
The Forty-Year-Old Version	2020	123	Radha Blank (BF)	Radha Blank (BF)
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom	2020	94	George C. Wolfe (BM)	Ruben Santiago-Hudson (BM), August Wilson (BM)
		1,362		

Transitioning from Object-to-Subject

The perception of self-importance is frequently associated with the dichotomy of object versus subject (Morrison, 2017). The author points out that normalizing someone as an object is a divisive tool that portrays an individual or a group as inferior or as the *Other*. In this study, most Black female protagonists are portrayed as objects or commodities. In “The Forty-Year-Old Version,” Rhada is seen as the “White gaze’s eroticism of Black pain” because of her fear of failure as a playwright. Rhada’s transition from object-to-subject occurred at the end of her successful opening night, when she positioned herself center stage and reclaimed her voice and soul through freestyling.

Hair It Is

Hair It Is centers on hair representation across the dataset. Our oppositional gaze revealed that Black female leads and co-leads with professional careers were more likely to be depicted with Eurocentric hair compared to those in non-professional positions. For example, Cheryl was cast as a physician who wore a synthetic straightish weave/wig. Jo played a magazine editor with a short-tapered haircut with straight hair. Also, we discovered that films that *did* depict Black female protagonists with natural and protective styles were more likely to have Black female directors and/or writers. For example, Queen wore a tiny-weeny afro, Pariah rocked tight twists, and Radha styled head wraps to protect her natural hair.

The Lies (You) Tell

Traditional adult developmental theories are largely shaped by White and male ethnocentrism, emphasizing linear and individualized progressions. These types of developmental progressions were found in films such as *What Men Want* and *1982*. Alternatively, when examining the films, we observed that some addressed the developmental milestones of Black female protagonists in connection to their sociocultural, personal, spiritual, and psychological aspects.

In *Queen & Slim*, Queen's personal growth and identity are not just a solitary journey but are significantly molded by the challenges of cultural and political authority, familial relationships, connections within the Black community, and spirituality.

Implications and Conclusion

We set forth three practical implications for educators in the fields of adult and higher education. First, we recommend exploring alternative adult development theories that consider sociocultural factors and psychological growth (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). These alternative adult development theories can be incorporated into instructional content, group activities, and expert-led discussions to provide diverse perspectives for adult learners (Andrews & McClain, 2022). The second implication suggests embracing oppositional knowledge, a self-defined perspective empowering marginalized groups in their resistance efforts (Collins, 2016). It offers alternative viewpoints through various pedagogical activities, promoting cultural competence and facilitating dialogue about disenfranchised communities for all learners. Lastly, we recommend using diverse films as a pedagogical tool to help adult learners grasp concepts of learning and development (McClain, 2019). Films enable learners to engage with different narratives, fostering reflection, insights, and emotional responses (Kroth & Cranton, 2014; McClain, 2019). Film opens avenues for learners to analyze stories and social phenomena in relation to their own experiences, promoting alternative interpretations (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). In conclusion, although there is an increase in both the quality and quantity of Black women's representation, especially as protagonists in film, being a passive consumer is not an option. Cultural criticism is always necessary in mass media, notably in film, to scrutinize and comprehend the intricacies of the experiences of marginalized groups within media narratives (hooks, 1992/2014).

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“Nip This Crap in the Bud”: Using Social Media to Understand Bullying in Graduate School

Josie L. Andrews, PhD

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Abstract. Graduate school experience is regarded as a *period of professional infancy* in which graduate students rely on a successful socialization process to help them develop a professional identity within the profession. Unfortunately, the socialization process has also emerged as a hotbed of academic bullying. In this study, 621 online public social media written posts were analyzed to further understand graduate students’ experiences of academic bullying. Based on a thematic analysis, three themes emerged – “mental gymnastics,” hammering on all sides, and “nip this crap in the bud.” Implications for academic leaders will be discussed.

Keywords: graduate students, bullying, socialization, professional identity

Commitment to any profession is cultivated through a socialization process. In graduate school, interpersonal relationships serve as agents of socialization through which graduate students acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are vital to fostering a commitment to the profession (Liddell et al., 2014; Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020). Unfortunately, the socialization process has also emerged as a hotbed of hostility and academic bullying. This study aimed to explore academic bullying and its impact on graduate student socialization. The guided questions were as follows:

1. What are some bullying behaviors that graduate students’ experiences in the academy?
2. What are the positions of bullying that graduate students experience in the academy?
3. How do graduate students cope with academic bullying?

The above section introduced the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Next, the literature, method, and major themes will be reviewed. Lastly, implications for academic leaders will be discussed.

Literature Review

Graduate Student Socialization

For this empirical study, the literature review is situated around two relevant areas – graduate student socialization and academic bullying. Graduate school requires not only an investment of time and money but also opportunity costs, such as a loss of income to pursue a graduate degree (Cassuto & Weisbuch, 2021). Nevertheless, U.S. graduate school admission is rising (U.S. Council of Graduate Schools, 2023). The organization reports that admission to U.S. graduate schools increased almost 4% between Fall 2021 and 2022. Graduate education prepares adult learners for an array of aspirations, such as learning for *knowledge's sake*, research, teaching, professional service, professional development, entrepreneurship, enhanced reputation/credibility, and career beyond academia (Cassuto & Weisbuch, 2021). Graduate school experience is considered a *period of professional infancy* (Bruss & Kopala, 1993) in

which learners rely on a successful socialization process to help them adopt necessary norms, knowledge, competencies, values, and attitudes to develop a professional identity within the profession (Liddell et al., 2014; Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020). While the socialization process is different among graduate students, the culture of higher education plays an essential role in its process (Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020). Sadly, the convergence of both a toxic culture and socialization process can create a space of hostility and bullying in the academy.

Academic Bullying

Bullying is a skeleton in the closet across the higher education landscape. There is no single definition of bullying; however, there are three consistent characteristics. First, bullying occurs over a *duration of time*, at least six months. Leymann's (1993) clinical research set forth a six-month benchmark that suggests that an isolated incident cannot be described as bullying; however, it *can* escalate and have a long-term traumatic impact. These isolated incidents are often defined as aggression, incivility, degrees of social stress, and/or interpersonal conflict (Twale, 2018). Bullying is a *repetitive practice*, typically weekly, in which an individual encounters negative and unwelcome acts from one or more individuals, which aims to exclude, demean, and disrupt norms and productivity (Keashly & Neuman, 2013). Finally, bullying is a psychological violence that naturally manifests *power differences* between the target and perpetrator (Hollis, 2018). Perpetrators exert power and/or perception of power because of organizational culture, social characteristics, and recognized vulnerabilities (Twale, 2018). Bullying can happen to anyone, yet research reminds us that graduate students are more vulnerable to bullying (e.g., Goodboy et al., 2015; Moss & Mahmoudi, 2021; Yamada et al., 2014). Reasons include the competitive nature of higher education and power imbalance (Yamada et al., 2014). Furthermore, several graduate students may be abused or exploited because they rely on their advisors and supervisors for grades, research scholarships, assistantships, letters of recommendation, references, and career opportunities (Moss & Mahmoudi, 2021). Bullying impacts graduate students by imperiling their professional identity development (Liddell et al., 2014), hindering their ability to achieve academic goals, limiting access and resources (Goodboy et al., 2015), and harming their mental health (Woolston, 2019).

Method

As a non-traditional method, social media can capture a phenomenon in real time and offers scholars a new lens into individuals' worlds, experiences, and insights (McKenna et al., 2017). Individuals' willingness to publicly share experiences creates a wealth of data that can be gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to understand a phenomenon. Qualitatively, this social media project was constructed to understand how graduate students made sense of their academic world and the bullying they experienced.

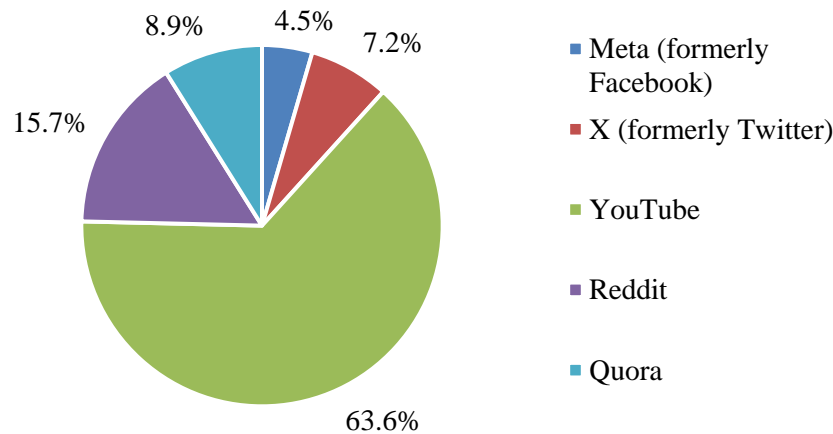
Data Collection

Without any constraints, the initial round produced 11,124 online public written posts on bullying; therefore, I created a more manageable dataset. First, I purposefully selected public social media platforms so I could access them without paying a fee or becoming a member. This parameter yielded 6,539 online public written posts. To be included, the data had to center on graduate students and be within the higher education setting—the second parameter generated 2,321 online public written posts. Lastly, the parameter focused on a timeframe between May 1, 2013, and April 30, 2022. This period was selected to show that the public conversations around

graduate students' experiences of academic bullying has rapidly risen over the last decade. Based on the last parameter, 621 online public written posts were eligible for this study. Figure 1 shows that nearly 64% of the eligible data were collected for YouTube, followed by Reddit (15.7%), then Quora (8.9%).

Figure 1

Social Media Platforms



Themes and Discussion

Based on a thematic analysis, three major themes emerged – hammering from all sides, *mental gymnastics*, and *nip this crap in the bud*.”The following section aims to 1) present themes to answer the research questions and 2) discuss those themes as they relate to literature.

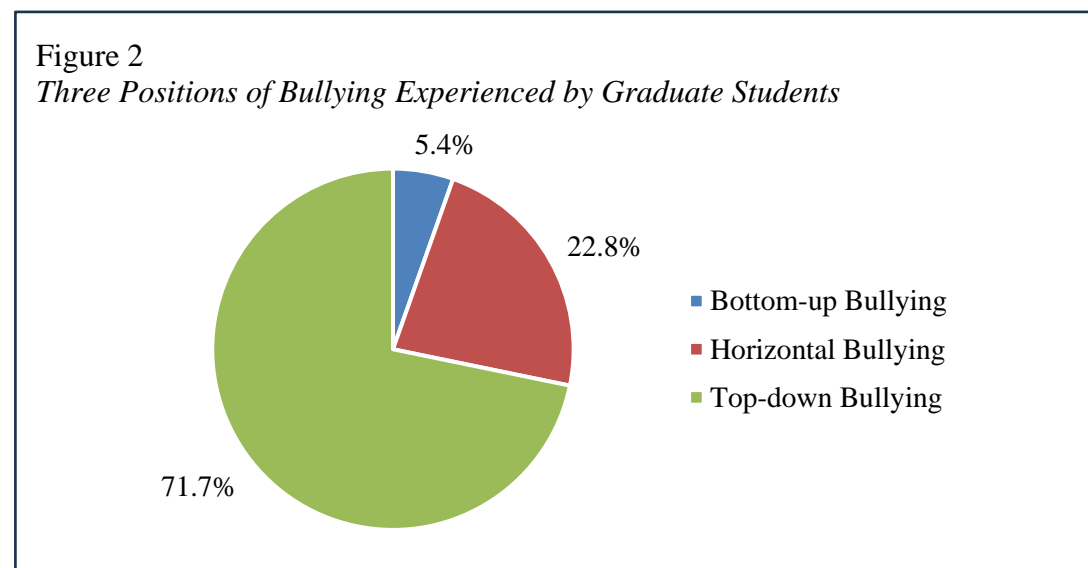
Hammering From All Sides

In response to the question, *what are the positions of bullying that graduate students experience in the academy?* My analysis revealed that targets were hammered by acts of bullying from all sides: top-down, horizontal, and bottom-up. Top-down bullying occurs between a target and a perpetrator who is in a position of authority, such as an advisor/supervisor-to-graduate (Goodboy et al., 2015). Horizontal or peer bullying happens when the target experiences bullying from a peer, like graduate to graduate (Yamada et al., 2014). Lastly, bottom-up bullying arose when the target was bullied by a perpetrator who held a lesser position, such as undergraduate to graduate (Busby et al., 2022). Nearly 66% (403) of the dataset expressed or implied the position of the perpetrator. Figure 2 illustrates that graduate students were at least 13 times more likely to experience top-down bullying (71.7%) than bottom-up bullying (5.4%) and over three times more likely to experience horizontal bullying (22.8%).

“Mental Gymnastics”

In reply to the question, *what are some bullying behaviors that graduate students’ experience in the academy?* It was revealed that graduate students were subject to *mental gymnastics* while navigating challenging relationships with their perpetrators. For example, CK suggested that their academic supervisor acted maliciously by withholding information that affected their professional career. The post read:

My supervisor was either too lazy or didn't bother to read my thesis draft for more than a year. I keep chasing her for my final seminar with less than 6 months to go toward the end of my 6-year study journey. She pulled a fast one and stated that my thesis failed her expectation. What? After 6 long years, I submitted it to her constantly for review and this is the stunt she is pulling on me right now. I just had enough of the mental gymnastics with her.



In another example, Coco suggested that they reported their experience with bullying to the institution's Ombudsman, but their experiences were minimized. Coco shared:

My advisor bullied me for years, and telling the ombudsman was a total joke. He just shrugged it off by telling it a "rite of passage" and basically said, "get over it." I'm bullied into silence and scared to speak up.

Coco's experience is all too familiar across the higher education landscape in which several academic community members engage in a rite of passage mentality. This mentality suggests that individuals must endure emotional and psychological abuse as a necessary requirement of academic life (Hollis, 2021). Most importantly, it can normalize the bullying culture and become complicit in the mistreatment of others. Also, it was revealed that graduate students were subjected to other academic bullying behaviors, notably from their advisors/supervisors, such as taking credit for their work, gossiping about them, adding excessive pressure to produce work, emasculating work efforts, and changing the rules of the game without notification.

"Nip This Crap in the Bud"

An individual who experiences bullying "ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts" (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 15). So, the final question remains: *how do graduate students cope with academic bullying?* Several graduate students said they coped with bullying by recording/journaling their stories, establishing boundaries, adding a co-advisor/supervisor, and joining networks and banding resources. Ladybard suggested that the only way to "nip this crap in the bud" was to seek legal assistance. They stated:

See a lawyer. That'll nip this crap in the bud. Costly but cheaper than years of therapy and unemployment – not to mention loss of self-confidence.

Often, the acts of bullying create such a horrendous environment some targets decide to exit the institution (Hollis, 2018). This was true for Metalic. The post read:

The bullies do great damage to our confidence and career prospects, while enjoying the fruits of success that we are largely excluded from. I'm getting too old for this and I'm tired of being poor for no good reason after all of these years. With a heavy heart, I now leave the professional field that I've always wanted to work in.

While Ladybard and Metalic developed coping mechanisms, academic bullying had already impeded and derailed their self-confidence, career opportunities, and socialization process. Thus, this results in an unhealthy professional identity (Liddell et al., 2014). An unhealthy professional identity includes a lack of commitment to the field or fulfillment in expanding knowledge and competencies, limiting success in professional roles (Goodboy et al., 2015; Liddell et al., 2014).

Recommendations and Conclusion

While many higher education institutions strive to create an academic culture of civility, mutual respect, and caring, little has been done to protect graduate students from the prevalence of academic bullying. The following three recommendations are offered to academic leaders to disrupt bullying. First, establish a task force to clearly define academic bullying, set forth consequences, develop reporting forms, identify mandated reporters, etc. Also, establish a culture change entity that deals with and responds to bullying behaviors. Third, implement mandatory professional development courses to educate the academic community on bullying and its consequences, triggers, and ways to disrupt it.

In conclusion, graduate education aspires to develop adult learners as future leaders, scholars, intellectuals, and professionals within countless disciplines. Successful socialization processes create a space for learners to gain the knowledge, skills, and values fundamental for successfully entering a profession. Regrettably, the socialization processes have been weaponized to perpetuate bullying. When a bullying culture is tolerated and often normalized, everyone loses. Therefore, disturbing bullying is an “all hands-on-deck” approach that requires but is not limited to creating awareness, establishing anti-bullying interventions, creating an inclusive culture, and reporting acts of mistreatment.

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Using Twitter Spaces to Explore Reparations for Black American Descendants of U.S. Freedmen: Activism, Ethnicity, and Online Informal Adult Learning

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Abstract: The U.S. Supreme Court, on June 29, 2023, issued a ruling in the case of STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS, INC. v. PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE. The decision was anxiously interpreted as an end to race-based Affirmative Action. However, insufficient attention has been given to their discussions, holding that race was an *underinclusive* category for those Blacks who are the descendants of slaves and U.S. Freedmen. This secondary source research examined how social media led to informal adult education on reparations. It presents how online activism parleyed into hundreds of adults presenting before the Office of Management and Budget to consider the *Freedmen* term and a unique ethnic identity for descendants of slaves in America as it revises the Federal Statistical Policy Directive (SPD 15)¹.

Keywords: Black Americanism, generational wealth gap, reparations, slavery, U.S. Freedmen descendant

Lineage-based reparations for Black Americans who are the descendants of formerly enslaved people have been an emerging national social justice debate in the United States. In this research, secondary source data was collected and analyzed. Adults have been engaged in nonformal online learning using *Twitter [X] Spaces* to discuss the emotionally and politically charged topic of direct cash reparations. This ethnographic study emerged from a class assignment where graduate students used weekly discussion boards to grapple with contemporary social issues philosophically and theoretically. The national reparations movement was the topic selected for this article. The students in the course observed and documented discussions occurring in the *Twitter X Spaces* voice capture rooms and connected them to course content. The experiences resulted in transformational learning moments for the Black American and Latino graduate students relative to their views about the merits of reparations for the descendants of U.S. Freedmen.

On November 21, 2022, during an OMB listening session and presentation, scholars advanced a more in-depth proposal for categories of race and ethnicity concepts for the U.S. Freedmen descendant group (Brown, McDowell, Darity Jr., & Mullen, 2022). After further research and informal reflection with the affected group members concerned about the changes, the scholars restructured the terms and definitions presented at the initial listening session last Fall. The Federal Registry Note (FRN) Docket # OMB-2023-0001² was released on January 27, 2023. It included several of the Reparations Planning Committee's (RPC) recommendations offered at the initial OMB presentation over the proposed changes to the race and ethnicity terms being considered for Black Americans who were the descendants of emancipated slaves in the United States (i.e., Freedmen). The RPC subsequently submitted a full technical report requesting that definitions and terms be created to disaggregate—for purposes of empirical data collection and fair distribution of government resources—by race and ethnicity those Black Americans who descended from formerly enslaved people in the United States.

² [Initial Proposals For Updating OMB's Race and Ethnicity Statistical Standards](#). A Notice by the [Management and Budget Office](#) on [01/27/2023](#)

Background

The purpose of this research was exploratory because the secondary source data was collected from a class project. Graduate students monitored and documented—using the course’s *Canvas* Learning Management System (LMS) discussion threads—their interpretations of the national Black American U.S. Freedmen descendants’ reparations movement, the debates occurring online, and how transformative the disorienting dilemma process was for them as observer-listeners (Seeley, 2023; Tisdell, 2003). Research question one (R1) was, *What is the current state of knowledge about lineage-based cash reparations payments and levels of support among graduate students and other adults within the informal learning context (e.g., Twitter)?* The second research question two (R2) was, *How were race and ethnicity concepts negotiated by discussion participants relative to who would be eligible for U.S. reparations?* This paper is organized with a literature review, a description of the methodology and research approach, the data analysis, and findings that produced major themes from the in vivo qualitative coding of the data and the synthesis of emerging concepts. The paper concludes by describing the worldviews (reality paradigms) associated with the adults participating in the online national Black American U.S. Freedmen descendant reparations movement. The research identifies typologies of social activism and describes informal adult learning within the context of *X Spaces*’ social media voice-capture discussion rooms.

Literature Review

Democracy and equality, as concepts of nation-building, present a contradiction for a country that codified slavery in its founding to advance its wealth (Darity & Mullen, 2020). The Continental Army engaged in a Revolutionary War against the British crown. It held that taxation without representation was an anathema (Bryant, 2015) to the vision of freedom and democracy forged by its colonial-settler class in the *new world* that would become the United States of America. Ironically, even enslaved in America, Blacks have arguably been the exemplars of freedom-fighting patriots, having served in every war conflict—including the Revolutionary War while enslaved—on behalf of what would subsequently become the sovereign nation of America (Hocker, 1990; Tillman II, 2021). Historically, Black Americans have constantly engaged in revolutionary praxis (Freire, 2000) and radical acts to pursue freedom and equal rights (Darity & Mullen, 2020; Johnson, 1997). Such actions included fighting for independence from slavery and the benefits of manumission reparations. As an example, in the 1834 case of *Fisher’s Negroes v. Dabbs*, in his will, Peter Fisher “(1) called for his slaves to be set free; (2) left them livestock, farming equipment, and a year’s worth of financial support; and (3) granted them the right to live on his plantation for 15 years following his death” (Bryant, 2015, p. 94). However, justice remained elusive for the Freedmen cited in the Dabbs case. In a scandalous maneuver by the nephew of Fisher (James Dabbs), who administered the estate, with the aid of a lower court ruling, the formerly enslaved people were threatened to relinquish the bequeathed benefits and into a bullied agreement to immigrate to Liberia in exchange for their freedom. Hence, they were denied the reparations owed to them per Fisher’s wishes. Moreover, the Supreme Court subsequently expanded upon the unfair ruling. It required that the terms of space occupancy for the formerly enslaved—who obtained manumission by Fisher—be that of removal from the state of Tennessee and beyond the limits of the United States of America (Bryant, 2015).

A lesser-known fact of history is that President Lincoln and many white abolitionists opposed Freedman Frederick Douglass. The former two advocated that the newly emancipated immigrate to Liberia, Africa (Tackach, 2021) versus obtaining their restorative justice owed via full citizenship and direct monetary compensation in America. Nevertheless, most Blacks who were granted freedom from slavery and living in the country rejected such attempts at deception, holding that America was the home they had built for themselves and their families. Therefore, the United States’ fortunes as an emerging sovereign also belonged to them, and their collective destiny was intertwined (Darity & Mullen, 2020) in what the authors of this article have termed *Black Americanism*. In the twentieth century, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—quoting Frederick Douglass—excoriated the injustices faced by descendants of the emancipated slaves (i.e., Negroes). He expounded upon how the Black American Freedmen had not received reparations in a speech, *The Other America*, delivered at Stanford University. The Martin Luther

King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (2015) offers video documentation where Dr King reiterated that the formerly enslaved were “released to freedom and famine” (20:15) while at the same time, the 1862 Homestead Act provided newly arrived Europeans with land and what Katznelson (2006) described as affirmative action for whites.

Methodology

In 2022, graduate students were required to create or resurrect a dormant Twitter account (now rebranded as X) to join and listen to the emerging voice-capture community engagement public discussions called *Twitter Spaces*. The benefits of *X Spaces* were that they created innovative nonformal and informal reflection-in-action adult learning moments for graduate students (Mintz, 2016; Schön, 1983). The adult learners needed to grapple with theoretical and experiential knowledge gained about the Week 4 discussion board topic of Reparations for Black Americans. The pedagogical approach to the course was to create a multiplier *affective*³ impact (Brown et al., 2023) for group and self-directed learning best practices, including experiential learning (Kolb, 2014) and transformational learning (Smith & Morris, 2023). The course connected the content literature to the students’ social action (Tisdell, 2003, as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 139) interpreted as *embodied knowing* experiences of identity in three dimensions (intellectual, emotional, and spatial audio) as graduate students processed the conversations within the online social media voice-capture discussion environment.

Social Media and Voice-Capture Technology

The listening sessions were assigned during week four of a five-week course. Before entering the Twitter voice-capture spaces, the instructor guided the graduate students so they could gain content mastery—as evidenced by submitted course papers, class discussions, and active learning activities. The graduate students understood more deeply the *liberal, progressive, behaviorist, humanistic, radical critical, analytic*, and *postmodernist* foundational adult education philosophies (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Social media has facilitated civic and community engagement, not confined to virtual online spaces—for the greater good or evil. Emerging and innovative forms of contemporary nonformal adult education (Yamashita et al., 2022) have served to revitalize Black grassroots activism, particularly about reparations in online adult learning spaces, leading to participants who identified as former education professionals, celebrities, working-class adults, political operatives, or academics.

However, informal online adult learning exposes participants to risks (e.g., doxxing) or the revealing of racist dark web activities where communities of practice meet to plan and execute nefarious acts. For example, the Buffalo, NY massacre gunman wrote on his firearm, “Here’s Your Reparations,” “Niggers”; and developed a horrid online Manifesto within an online community of practice (Saunders, 2022).

Data Collection, Coding, and Analysis

The secondary data source collected from the Canvas LMS discussion board posts included supplementary hyperlinks, written reflections, reading circle attachments, and video resources that some graduate students embedded into their LMS discussion board responses (Hahn, 2011). The use of secondary source qualitative data (SSQD) has grown in popularity, particularly in the social sciences and education fields (Sherif, 2018). The literature explains that the increase in use is partly due to the limitation of quantitative survey data for obtaining the rich and deep descriptive interpretation of complex human phenomena, particularly in ethnographic inquiry and offering counternarratives (Ramdeholl & Jones, 2023) that help to thwart ethnic erasure in higher education. SSQD has been a means for constructing new inquiry questions with existing data sets, strengthening the development of theories and strategies used by practitioners through generating data and analysis that examine social phenomena in new and different ways (Boeren, 2018). The SSQD allowed for the development of emergent questions

³ Affective learning involves moods, feelings, and attitudes that can emerge during team/group student work due to the diverse Spiral Dynamic Theory ontological worldview(s) of the adult learner(s) and the social context that locates the graduate-level education.

surrounding the use of social media and online informal adult learning. Graduate students made connections as to how topics would impact their philosophical perspectives and their experiential and transformational learning, in this case, about reparations for Black American descendants of U.S. Freedmen. Collected data was organized and analyzed for Level Two categorization after the Level One open coding of their comments entered on the discussion boards relative to their experiences in X Spaces—including their written paper reflections and field trip narratives (Kolb, 2014). The interpretations of the coded text and responses were reviewed and confirmed (via member-checking techniques), with each graduate student ensuring that the documentation of their responses appropriately matched the coded themes. In the Level Three analysis, six significant themes emerged from the data. Themes emerged following in vivo coding of direct quotes.

Major Themes

The graphic display below (Figure 1) captured the authentic voice of each submission, matching patterns identified for each graduate student via an interpretive-coded theme. Few data responses conformed to a single theme typology. Therefore, the participant quotes can have multiple letter code designations based upon the following conceptual meta-themes that emerged from discussants: (a) experiences of deep trauma and transformation, (b) identification of complex thinking and analysis, (c) discussion room management concerns, (d) identification of politics and praxis, (e) questioning information veracity, (f) a desire for coalition building. Researchers assert that people try as much as possible to avoid suffering and make adult life enjoyable (Toma & Berge, 2023). However, professed suffering and trauma in this project were a source of the adult participants' transformation. Moments sharing seemed cathartic as people

Figure 1

Display Matrix of Select Major Data Coding Themes

Participants and Theme Codes	Graduate Student In Vivo Direct Quotes
Arturo E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I joined a Twitter space called 'Are "Black" immigrants too immature to discuss OUR issues?' #reparation. I have never used Twitter spaces before. However, after being in the space and listening to people speak, it was amazing how a platform like this allows people to get together and engage in educational conversations about how things are right now. The primary purpose of the space I was in was to educate us on the appropriate information to believe."
Ruben A, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Spaces allowed me to view reparations from a different lens and a diverse perspective. The Spaces allowed me to hear the passion of the advocates speaking that only want justice. I look forward to learning more about this topic and becoming well versed in reparations."
Luís A, F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Reparations is not a topic that I was very familiar with and really did not understand what exactly it entails. I believe that a lot of harm and trauma was created by the US government by allowing slavery to be legal. The good-o-boy-run government has always been oppressive to minority races. The level of white supremacy is penetrated and can be seen in all aspects of life in the U.S. There is a need for a systematic change so there is true equality."

Note. This figure represents the major themes after three levels of coding modeled after the grounded theory coding approach of Qureshi and Ünlü (2020). The letter code's key theme interpretations were: A =Trauma and Transformation, B = Complex Thinking and Analysis, C = Room Dialogue Management, D = Reparations Politics and Praxis, E = Trustworthiness and Veracity, and F = Desires for Coalition Building.

described their traumas in safe, culturally supportive spaces. *X participants* shared profound personal experiences—which deeply impacted the graduate students—and would receive emotional validation within the online discussion community, leading to radical and meaningful change incidents. *R1* showed that the depth of knowledge among Twitter users was extensive and helped build the graduate student's knowledge capacity as they documented their transformative experiences in support of reparations. *R2* showed that racial identity was very personal, and Black Americans felt a need for a unique racial identity that did not *denationalize* or *misracialize* them as African, holding that it was important to respect their unique history as Blacks who descended from the formerly enslaved in America.

Discussion

One forward-thinking approach to social and generational repair for the descendants of slaves and U.S. Freedmen is to reinstitute the unfinished work of Reconstruction (Foner, 2012). Ideally, the authors of this work hold that it would be an appropriate compelling government interest that aligns with the recent SCOTUS ruling on Affirmative Actions (e.g., to correct the sanctioned harms caused by failed Federal government policies)—to establish a national *Office of Post-Reconstruction Remediation and Reparations Justice* for the descendants of U.S. Freedmen. Nevertheless, its establishment is not a precondition for direct cash payments due to the generational debt owed to eligible heirs. Those funds should go directly to the posterity of the formerly enslaved, the subsequent U.S. Freedmen descendants.

The Federal government established the Office of Indian Affairs on March 11, 1824, which it maintains until today. However, the Freedmen's Bureau (enacted by legislative acts in 1865 and 1866), intended to usher in the newly emancipated Black Americans into full citizenship, was limited to a mere seven-year administrative run. The thwarted efforts of Reconstruction were sealed in a series of failures, such as the Great Compromise⁴ of 1877, where President Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to end the Reconstruction Era and authorized the removal of federal troops charged with protecting the lives and property of the newly emancipated (DuBois, 1935). The latter decision led to the rise of a campaign of domestic terrorism (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan), which included the retrenchment of Black citizens' rights, the lynching of Freedmen family members, and the confiscation of their lands and properties (Woodward, 1991).

How the OMB codifies its revisions to SPD-15 is vital for a federal Black Reparations project (Brown et al., 2022; Darity, 2023). First, it will establish a distinct ethnic identification and thwart efforts to culturally ethnocide the descendants of slaves' contribution to American History through racial assimilation schemes. Delineation of Freedmen heirs will provide for the empirical variables to research, monitor, and gauge ongoing harms that contribute to the extreme generational wealth gaps and anti-Black Americanism being experienced by the descendants of U.S. Freedmen. Lastly, an ethnic identifier will guide the fair distribution of federal resources and actions of repair and justice toward the descendent community (Brown et al., 2023).

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⁴ The Compromise of 1877 was an informal, unwritten deal that settled the disputed 1876 U.S. Presidential election; through it, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was awarded the White House on the understanding that he would remove the federal troops from South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana (History.com editors, 2019).

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Institutions Recognition of Female Graduate Learners' Voices and the Mediating Influences of the #Me-Too Movement

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Abstract: The researcher framed the #Me-Too social justice activist movement as a plausible mediating variable influencing organizations' and subordinate evaluators' recognition of students during the portfolio learning assessment (PLA) process. The researcher's findings indicated when correlating evaluators ratings to academic years and the apex of the #Me-Too movement's viral social media event, male and female evaluators significantly ($p < .05$, $p < .01$) demonstrated a pattern (73%) of assigning higher ordinal ratings to male learners' portfolio submissions in comparison to ratings assigned to female learners' portfolio products. The paper highlighted the disparities women in education faced when seeking recognition for their voices and academic works. While the researcher was unable to generalize the paper's findings, the researcher posed implications for further research.

Keywords: women in education, portfolio learning assessment, #Me-Too movement.

Stanton (1996) defined voice as the connected tissue that links knowing and thought. Hall (1999) described voice as an "expression of one's experiences as valid and different from the dominant myth, at the risks of being silenced" (p.89). Belenky et al. (1986) and Collins (1998) highlighted the barriers women in academia faced when seeking recognition for their voices and academic works. Rossiter (1993) presented academic and research institutions norms and scripts fostered the silencing of women's contributions to academia and to science as a call for action where "the sexist nature of much of women's systematic under-recognition should be acknowledged, noted, and even highlighted in the sociology of knowledge or science, as a named 'effect'." (p. 337).

The purpose of the paper was to investigate the research question: *Did a correlation exist between the viral apex of the #Me-Too social activist movement and changes in institutions and their subordinate evaluators behavioral-norm-congruence when recognizing male and female graduate learners' voices?* First, I presented literature regarding the PLA process as a platform for the marginalization of female learners' written products. Second, I provided a brief history of the #Me-Too movement, focusing on the social media viral event in 2017 and the subsequent onset of organizational changes in behavioral-norm-congruence scripts. Finally, I described the research design, findings, and discussion.

Literature Review

The paper correlated three variables in the study of academia's under-recognition and silencing of female graduate learners' voices within the PLA process. First, evaluators' assessment of male and female learners' portfolio products served as the independent variable. Second, female and male graduate learners' portfolio submissions were the dependent variable. Third, Yin (2018) and Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) described the value of examining the temporal influence of time-spaced events as the data provided the investigator additional insight into patterns of organizations and subordinates social context. The time-space of the #Me-Too movement's viral event and social media communications served as the mediating variable where the researcher investigated the implications of the apex of the event on changes in organizations and evaluators' behavioral-norm-congruence.

Institutions and Evaluators Use of the PLA Process

Female graduate learners experiencing evaluator's marginalization during the learning assessment process served as a microcosm of what later expanded to a systemic effect of marginalization throughout the women's academic career pipeline (Gilligan & Richards, 2018). Despite numerous attempts by institutions to instill measures to reduce evaluator's biases within the PLA process, literature demonstrated raters systematically scored privileged male learners' submissions superior to female graduate learners' submissions (Adams & Zuniga, 2016; Collins & Carpenter, 2019). Female graduate students' fears of under-recognition often led learners to silence their voices by conforming their portfolio submissions to organizational scripts (Ghaye, 2007; Ng et al., 2015). Brookfield (1993) presented female learners endured a higher level of critique than their male counterparts with the women facing the "dark underbelly of the inspirational rhetoric of critical reflection" (p. 215).

The #Me-Too Feminist Activist Movement Social Media Viral Event

Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2020) stressed the importance of identifying mediating events that may influence the social context of a problem set. The authors suggested when searching "for causation in qualitative data, extend beyond the quantitative paradigm's linear cause and effect" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020, p. 223). In 2017, actress Milano tweeted her silence regarding being a victim of sexual assault (Corrigan, 2019). The tweets and follow-on media attention propelled the #MeToo movement into the forefront of international social justice engagements. Within a day of Milano's posting, 4.5 million Facebook users posted 12 million reactions (Lang, 2019). Modrek and Chakalov (2019) estimated up to 34 million Twitter users read first-person accounts of individuals whom they followed. Later in 2017, *Time* magazine selected the #MeToo collective movement as '*Person of the Year*' (Alter et al., 2017). Lang (2019) posed the #MeToo activist movement "demonstrated the power of embodied structural information to effect change in the public sphere" (p. 18). Brookfield (1986) and Cerulo (1997) presented social movements, and the resultant media attention framed institution's scripts and learners gender constructionism.

Framing and Reframing Organizations Behavioral-norm-congruence

Bolman and Deal (2017) described framing and reframing as viewing a problem set from multiple perspectives to gain new insight and clarity into a perceived organizational failure. Silard (2018) and Van Kleef, Homan, and Cheshin (2012) posed behavioral-norm-congruence as the interaction between the imposed organizational scripts and subordinates' emotion-related behaviors. As the months progressed after the viral event, institutions reframed their behavioral-norm-congruence, professing a call to action in recognition of sexist power and the silencing of women's voices. Authorities launched investigations regarding sexist power and women's victimizations (Gibson et al., 2019). Institutions revamped their sexual harassment and assault policies and programs and designated counselors within their organizational structure to hear the voices of victims. However, Roth-Cohen, Ne'Eman-Haviv, and Bonny-Noach (2019) proposed patriarchal institutions, evaluators, and male learners tended to react indifferently or negatively to the digital cascade of the #Me-Too movement. Patriarchal institutions and privileged males viewed the directionality of the movement's accusations of male sexist power as being primarily negative.

Research Design

The researcher's design sought to answer the research question: *Did a correlation exist between the viral apex of the #Me-Too social activist movement and changes in institutions and their subordinate evaluators behavioral-norm-congruence when recognizing female graduate learners' voices?* The researcher analyzed learners' portfolios prior to, during, and after the social media apex of the #Me-Too activist movement. The 5-year period of research was academic years (AYs) 2015/2016 through 2019/2020. The population under study consisted of female and male graduate students attending a mid-western university. While the rubric's requirements did not change during the study period, the institution changed the learning assessment process where in AY 2019/2020 administrators removed students' names from portfolio submissions.

The researcher applied a sequential, quantitative approach consisting of two descriptive statistical tests: the Kruskal-Wallis H-test and the Mann-Whitney U-test. The researcher used a stratified, random representative sample set of 75 students from a population of 412 learners' portfolios. The sample set was divided into five subsets: male ($n=15$) and female ($n=15$) students from each AY for 150 portfolios. Of the seven student learning outcomes (SLO) within the portfolios, the investigator focused the paper on SLO 3. The SLO 3 rubric requirement encompassed learners demonstrating an understanding of social issues affecting adult learning. Each student submitted two artifacts and one critical essay. Evaluators rated students' submissions based on a Likert scale of 1 to 4. The rubrics requirements defined the ordinal ratings as unsatisfactory (1), basic (2), proficient (3), and distinguished (4). Up to six evaluators rated the students' portfolios, where two randomly selected raters reviewed each product.

Findings

First, the researcher conducted a two-tailed Kruskal-Wallis H-test. The researcher applied a 95% confidence level. The researcher proposed the null hypothesis as the median ratings across the five academic periods were equal. The alternative hypothesis was at least one of the five academic years differed in median ratings. The researcher depicted the test findings in Table 1. Of the five academic years, the statistical test indicated a statistically significant result where the null hypothesis was rejected for two conditions: male evaluators rating female learners' portfolio submissions and male evaluators rating male students' portfolio submissions. The test indicated the medians of the evaluator's ordinal rankings of the four groups within the five academic years were unequal. This means it was plausible over the longitudinal period that evaluators changed their rating behaviors and valued students' portfolio submissions differently when comparing academic years and students' genders.

Table 1

Case study quantitative findings using the Kruskal-Wallis, H-test

Variables		n	H	p
Evaluators ^a	Students ^b			
Female	Female	75	4.0947	.39334
Female	Male	75	5.4839	.24115
Male	Female	75	10.194	.03727*
Male	Male	75	14.980	.00474**

Note. Evaluators' genders were assigned as independent variables—learners' genders were assigned as dependent variables.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

A limitation of the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was the findings did not indicate if the rejection of the null hypothesis occurred before, during, or well after the apex of the #Me-Too movement's viral social media event. The researcher furthered the research by applying a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test using the previous sample set. The null hypothesis was the medians of the academic year pairings were identical. The alternative hypothesis was at least 1 of the 20 academic pairings differed in medians. The researcher applied a 95% confidence level. The null hypothesis was rejected for 11 of the 20 AY pairings. Figure 1 depicts the test results outlining the AY pairings, z-scores, p-values, and U-values for the 11 significant sample groupings.

The researcher formed several observations regarding the findings. First, all significant z-score values were negative, indicating that the mean of the 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 sample subsets was below the mean of other academic years. Second, the researcher found when correlating ratings before, during, and after the apex of the # MeToo movement event, male evaluators demonstrated a higher rate of change in their behavioral-norm-congruence while rating students. This was especially true for male raters rating

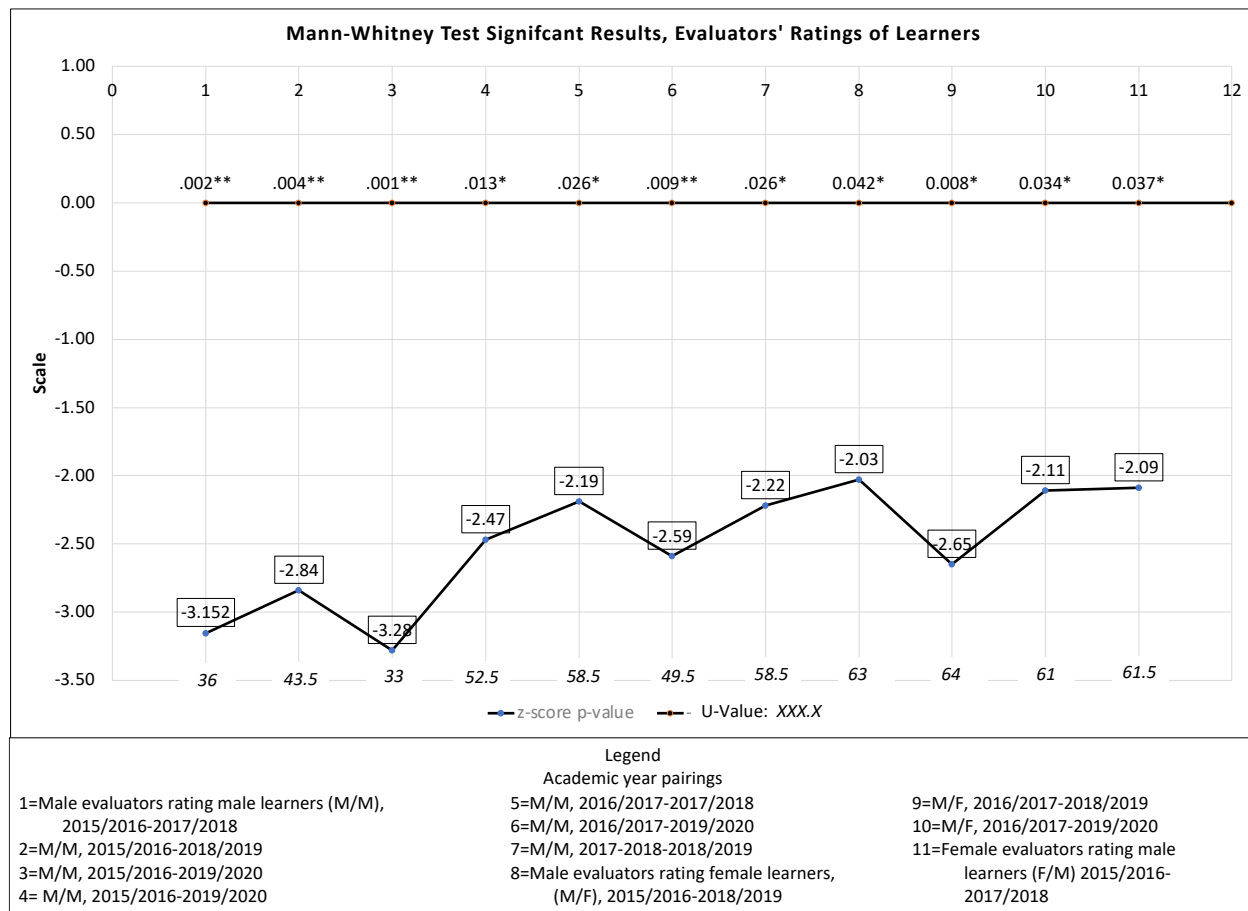
male learners' (M/M) portfolio products. Of the ten significant ($p=.05$, $p=.01$) findings, male evaluators demonstrated higher ordinal ratings in 7 M/M pairs. Third, female evaluators demonstrated a much lower rate of changes in their behavioral-norm-congruence, whereas the raters demonstrated a significant increase in 1 M/M pair.

Discussion

The researchers' rejection of the null hypotheses in the Kruskal-Wallis H-test and Mann-Whitney U-test demonstrated inequalities with male and female evaluator's rating assessments over the paper's longitudinal period. The paper's findings presented implications that existed in organizations and evaluators' behavioral-norm-congruence during and after the #Me-Too movement's social justice viral event. This was especially true where male and female raters recognized a higher percentage (73%) of ratings increases for male learners' portfolio products versus ratings increases for female learners' portfolio products. The data indicated disparities in organizational behavioral-norm-

Figure 1

Case study's statistically significant quantitative findings using the Mann-Whitney U-test



congruence post Me-Too Movement where raters placed higher values on recognizing male students' voices while under-recognizing female learners' voices. A plausible explanation for the disparities was raters reacted indifferently or negatively to the #Me-Too movements messaging (Roth-Cohen, Ne'Eman-Haviv, & Bonny-Noach, 2019).

The researcher could not generalize the #Me-Too movement's influence on organizations and the evaluator's administration of the PLA process. Further research, such as a qualitative analysis of evaluators' reactions to female graduate students' voices as the learners expressed their portfolio critical reflections. The paper provided a new perspective on organizations' use of the PLA process and the #Me-Too social justice activist movement, mediating evaluators' recognition of female graduate learners' voices.

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Developing Lifelong, Profound Learning Through Continuous Improvement

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Abstract: A model of individual continuous improvement based on lifelong learning processes and practices may provide a pathway to deeper, more meaningful experiences. Such a model could offer a method for individuals to strengthen their own sense of purpose and meaning through their chosen lifelong learning processes and practices. This paper explored continuous improvement as a vehicle for profound, lifelong learning and suggested music educators as a potential population of profound learners to further explore a model of individual continuous improvement.

Keywords: Deming's System of Profound Knowledge, Profound Learning Theory, music educators

In a recent article about workforce burnout rates, the *Harvard Business Review* reported early-career employees with signs of decreased well-being and increased stress and burnout, made worse by the pandemic, causing concern for their overall well-being (Simula, 2023). In a survey of over 70 academic articles in search of what it means to be adaptable while helping employees thrive and grow in rapidly changing conditions, McKinsey & Company reported that cultivating the habits of a lifelong learner is one of the essential characteristics of strength in adaptability (Kothari et al., 2021). A model of individual continuous improvement based on cultivating lifelong learning processes and practices has the potential to provide a pathway to deeper, more meaningful experience with potential application for adult education human resource development (HRD) practitioners and scholars. Alagaraja (2023) posed the following question to emphasize the need for well-being in HRD research: *What if we studied the phenomenon of well-being that combined streams of our life and work?* This paper aimed to conceptualize a model of individual continuous improvement as a vehicle for profound learning. The paper offers suggestions for future research and proposes music educators as a potential population to further conceptualize individual continuous improvement and profound learning theory.

Literature Review

Deming's System of Profound Knowledge

The literature review included a review of Deming's System of Profound Knowledge (SoPK), Profound Learning (PL) Theory, and continuous improvement qualities and applications. Deming's System of Profound Knowledge (SoPK) is an organizational framework that is used effectively to improve organizational processes continuously (Deming, 2018). Deming described the SoPK as four interrelated components 'working together' (p. 65) to accomplish the system's goal (Deming, 2018). These four interconnected elements included 1. appreciation of a system, 2. theory of knowledge, 3. variation, and 4. psychology (Deming, 2018). Due to the interrelated components, Wong and Headrick (2021) characterized the SoPK as the intellectual underpinning of continuous quality improvement. The SoPK was described as a transformative model that provides individuals and organizations a renewed sense of motivation and joy at work (Anjard, 1995; Deming, 2018). The Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle, a fundamental tool of continuous improvement measurement, could provide insight into the cyclical nature of processes and practices of continuous improvement (Baker, 2017; Deming, 2018). Adult learning processes in the workplace support workplace initiatives while supporting individual human resource development, continuous quality improvement, learning organizations, and other processes (McLean,

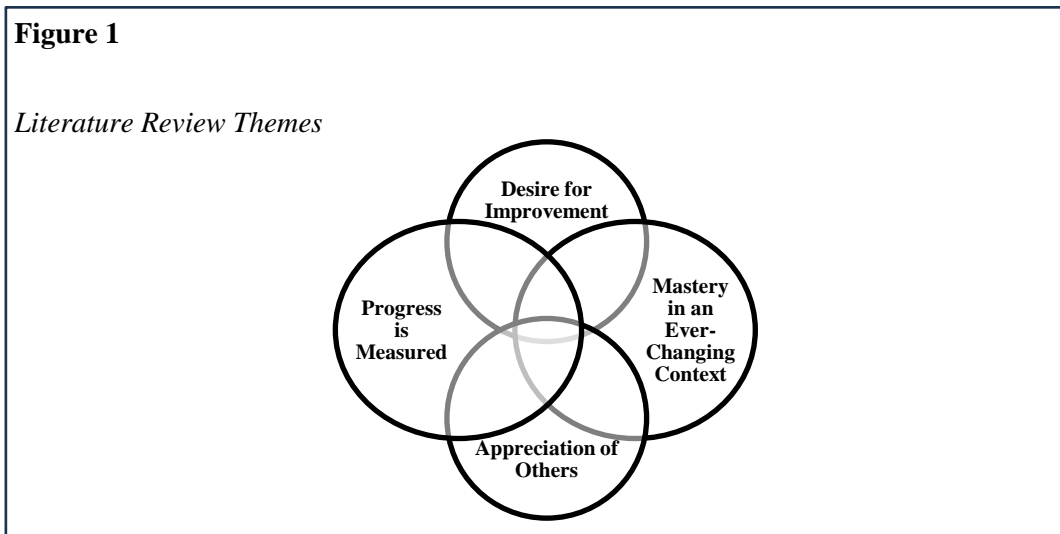
2006).

Profound Learning Theory

In a discussion of intentionality and profound learning, Kroth et al. (2022) noted, “Profound learning can occur by chance or by effort and when left to circumstance, depth of learning is unlikely to match what it would have been if deliberately pursued” (p.31). In addition, “It is in the planned, deliberate, and intentional pursuit of intentional practices that will result in deepened, lifelong learning” (p. 32). Through a conceptual model of profound learning, Kroth et al. (2022) illustrated profound learning as a process of deepening formation across the lifespan that includes intentional practices and consists of continuous processes of transformation, reformation, and deformation spanning a lifetime. The sustained nature of change and deepening formation over time is a theoretical connection point to continuous improvement as exemplified by the SoPK.

Findings

Relevant literature was reviewed to develop a conceptual model of individual continuous improvement based on the SoPK as a framework and to further conceptualize Profound Learning Theory (Daniels et al., 2023). Four themes emerged from the literature review as shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 represents the overlap between the themes, illustrating their interrelated nature and demonstrating the premise that continuous improvement is made up of various components that interact in concert to collectively improve outcomes.



Appreciation of Others

The theme of *appreciation of others* captured the transformative aspect of relationships in a continuous improvement learning context. Deming (2018) described the SoPK as a transformative model in that its principles would apply to every kind of relationship once it was understood and realized. Transformation of individuals was described as the ability to see self and others as part of a larger system connected by the quality and nature of relationships, interactions, communications, and cooperation (Deming, 2018; Hales & Chakravorty, 2006; Udod et al., 2020). Baker (2017) characterized Deming’s SoPK as improving the whole individual within important social contexts such as organizations, families, and communities. Kroth et al. (2022) noted the importance of others, such as teachers, role models, and learning communities. Wong and Headrick (2021) noted that people are fundamental to continuous improvement. An appreciation of the influence of others appeared to be an important factor in continuous improvement.

Desire for Improvement

The *desire for improvement* theme represented learner characteristics that are important for continuous

improvement. These characteristics included the importance of agency, self-efficacy, volition, and constant pursuit of improvement (Bandura, 2018; Chung, 1999; Kroth et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation and a desire for enjoyment of work may also be integral to continuous improvement. Deming (2018) noted, “One is born with a natural inclination to learn. Learning is a source of innovation. One inherits a right to enjoy his work” (p. 74). What brings joy to individuals may also foster the development of agency and the likelihood of lifelong continuous learning. Belief in one’s ability to grow and personal empowerment to improve to reach deeper, richer meaning and existence may also contribute to continuous improvement (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2018; Dweck & Yeager, 2020).

Progress is Measured

The ability to *measure progress* was another theme. Measurement was an important characteristic of continuous improvement, and one tool used to design and measure change over time was the PDSA cycle (Taylor et al., 2014). The PDSA cycle was a useful tool to measure improvements in personal practices as those practices change over time (Suarez-Barraza et al., 2013). Successive PDSA improvement cycles effectively connected prediction to learning (Wong & Headrick 2021). The PDSA cycle served as a mechanism to track changes in process outcomes over time and to measure change over time. In a qualitative research study context, measurement was defined as the change in various pursuits over time as indicators of physical status and as a marker of change over time (Charmaz, 2006).

Mastery in an Ever-Changing Context

Mastery describes the nature of continuous improvement as a mechanism occurring in an *ever-changing context*, deepening over time and contributing to a sense of increasing personal mastery over the life course. Senge (2006) characterized those with a strong sense of mastery as existing in a continuous state of lifelong growth with a clear personal vision. Growth was found to occur in a state of continuous change instead of a fixed state, allowing beliefs to adapt and change over time (Dweck, 2008). Learners who oriented themselves toward a growth mindset embraced a mastery-approach to goals in lifelong learning practices and demonstrated characteristics of personal mastery (Babenko et al., 2019; Bui et al., 2012). The nature of change within an ever-changing context and the ability of an individual to embrace this ever-changing context may be an important element in individual continuous improvement.

Conceptual Model

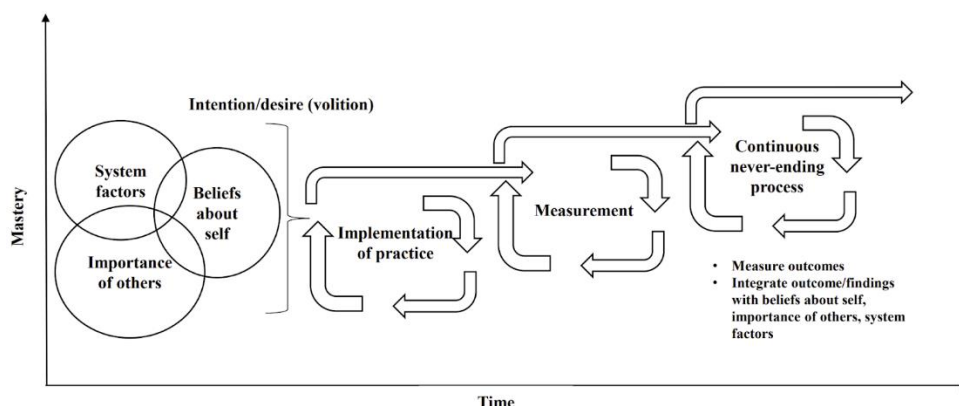
The intended outcome of the literature review was to develop a conceptual model for continuous improvement that integrates Deming’s SoPK with the PL model as a foundation for future theory building and testing. The conceptual framework was developed by integrating the themes into a continuous learning process that occurred over time in an ever-changing context. Figure 2 is the proposed model of individual continuous improvement. Mastery of a practice or process was the overarching goal of the model of individual continuous improvement. Mastery is conceptualized as a continuous, spiraling process.

Future Research

Music educators could provide an opportunity to explore profound, lifelong learning practices and processes. As lifelong learners, music educators demonstrated an interest in professional development and lifelong, continuous learning. (Hesterman, 2012). Kroth (2016) described a profound learner as “Someone who pursues deeper knowledge regularly over time” (p. 29). Profound learners have been characterized as learners who engage in intentional processes of transformation that evolve over time (Carr-Chellman & Kroth, 2017). Kroth et al. (2022) noted, “By their nature, practices involve processes. Although in the larger context, we consider lifelong learning to include transformation, deformation, and reformation” (p. 34). Varner (2023) argued that general music education if approached with intentionality

Figure 2

Conceptual Model of Individual Continuous Improvement



and self-reflection, may be one of the best ways to foster a positive approach to life. As noted by Carr-Chellman and Kroth (2017), “Profound learners are intentional about seeking depth as a way of life...and [intentionality] is a never-ending deepening process available to anyone” (p. 17). Vellacott and Ballantyne (2022) noted musical practice as an under-explored research topic in adult populations. Sloboda et al. (1996) examined how practice becomes vital to human expertise as it applies to musical expertise and demonstrates, “High achievers tended to be more consistent in their practice from week to week” (p. 287).

Conclusions

Music educators as lifelong learners with deliberate and intentional and practice routines could be a potential study population to further investigate how processes and practices contribute to lifelong, profound learning.

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Investigating Adult Education Graduate Program Trends in a Post-Covid19 Environment

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Abstract: The history of Adult Education (AE) graduate programs spans almost a century, yet many programs have experienced significant challenges in recent years to remain viable. The purpose of this paper is to understand the struggles AE graduate programs encounter in building, maintaining, and growing programs in North America. We conducted two separate research investigations, in 2015 and in 2022/23, to explore these issues. Our findings reveal program challenges to remain viable, as well as strategies faculty and administrators have utilized to strengthen their programs.

Keywords: Adult education graduate programs, program titles, higher education, health professions education, human resource development

As adult education (AE) professors who have worked as colleagues in master's and doctoral graduate programs in adult, professional, and higher education for several years in an urban public university, we have experienced significant challenges in maintaining viable graduate programs. The first challenge unfolded over many years due to state and federal funding cuts to higher education, making many public universities increasingly dependent on revenue from student enrollments or grant funding. Then came the Great Recession of 2008 to 2009, and the subsequent financial hardships experienced by many meant there was less money for investing in graduate or professional education. This resulted in low student enrollments that accelerated the closure of some AE programs (i.e., National Louis University and Cornell University). More recently, higher education institutions have struggled to maintain or increase student enrollment and funding due to the abrupt changes following the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent campus closings for several months. Most campuses switched their formats to online or hybrid learning with mixed success. Although the pandemic accelerated these learning format changes, they were not universally embraced by students and may have caused more student attrition. As students left campuses and universities lost revenue for campus services, university budgets experienced negative ripple effects.

In a post-pandemic context, many universities struggle with all these issues and others that threaten their ability to continue programs and services to students. In addition, as a result of lowered enrollments, some universities initiated re-organization plans for their colleges and/or programs, collapsing similar programs into newly formed colleges or departments and closing programs with low enrollments, forcing faculty members to find new ways to attract and retain students, often with minimal assistance from university administrations. University re-organization may impact program viability and how resources are allocated to programs. AE graduate programs are not immune to these challenges. In conversations with colleagues from other AE programs, we have learned that many face similar challenges to those we have encountered: administrative indifference, scarcity of resources, and stagnant enrollment.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the struggles AE graduate programs encounter in building, maintaining, and growing programs. AE graduate programs are frequently linked with inter-related programs, such as higher education or health professions education, so we also seek to understand the challenges these inter-related programs face. We first examine the history and *state* of academic graduate AE and related programs and then conclude with a larger discussion regarding AE program challenges and strategies faculty have utilized to strengthen their programs.

Brief History of Adult Education Graduate Programs

The earliest AE academic graduate programs began in the 1920s and 1930s with the establishment of programs at Columbia University and the University of Chicago. However, it wasn't until the 1950s that new AE graduate programs were established in many universities across the United States and Canada. These programs were strengthened when the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) was formed in 1957. Among CPAE's first activities was to develop graduate AE program standards that helped establish academic credibility for AE programs (Hansman & Rose, 2018). The CPAE program standards have been revised several times. They are currently being reviewed to respond to changing contexts (online/hybrid/remote learning, lack of administrative support, adoption for accreditation, etc.). Through researching the development of CPAE and AE graduate programs from the 1950s to the 1970s, Hansman and Rose (2018) uncovered that early AE faculty struggled to "carve" out a place for themselves in the academy and acceptance as legitimate academic programs. Unfortunately, this struggle for acceptance and legitimacy continues, as more recently, some AE programs have been forced to consolidate with other programs (i.e., Higher Education, HRD, Technology) to stay afloat in their universities. Others have permanently closed. In researching AE program closures, Milton et al. (2003) determined contributing factors to closure were program integration, responsiveness to change, and leadership.

Adult Education Program Research

In the past several years, studies have examined different factors related to AE graduate programs. Sonstrom et al. (2012) studied how AE doctoral programs in North America adhered to the 2008 program Standards of the CPAE by examining AE curricula on 37 program websites in the spring of 2011. They focused on the extent to which programs attended the nine recommended core curricular areas for doctoral programs. They found that all programs met at least two of the standards, but only two of the programs met all nine of the standards. Tisdell et al. (2016) took a different approach and conducted a quantitative survey of North American AE faculty and a textual analysis of the websites of AE graduate programs. Their purpose was to explore the field of AE to understand the demographic information about North American AE faculty and programs, faculty involvement with professional associations, and the nature of faculty work, interests, motivations, and satisfaction. Among other things, they reported a decrease in the number of doctoral AE programs based on Sonstrom et al.'s 2012 findings, from 44 AE doctoral programs to 38 doctoral programs in 2016.

Hill and Issac-Savage (2022) focused on AE program closures and described their experiences as senior AE faculty members whose programs were closed by university administrators. Both described higher education financial issues, administrative and leadership problems, and lack of university support that led to their programs closing. They cite Bérubé et al. to explain their experiences: "Program closures represent the confluence of . . . long-term

trends: The erosion and redefinition of tenure, the massive growth in the ranks of contingent faculty, . . . the nationwide disinvestment in public higher education and proliferation of administrative positions” (Hill & Isaac-Savage, 2022, p. 5). In more recent research, Collins and Zacharakis’s (2023) case study examined one AE program’s growth, decline, and continuous rebirth in the competitive higher education market and academic stratification. Throughout its 55 years of existence, the program, in its case study, has supported faculty in embracing an entrepreneurial spirit and accepting leadership positions within the program. Through flexibility and diversification, the program has continuously evolved to meet the needs of the current learners. They recommend that all faculty focus on the program and their professional reputations first. They conclude that “Today academic capitalism is real in higher education; for faculty who believe in the opportunities higher education provide to students, the challenge is to maintain our values while thriving in this landscape” (Collins & Zacharakis, 2023, p. 111).

Adult Education and Related Programs: Issues and Concerns

To better understand the state of AE programming, we conducted a web-based review of programs in the United States and Canada. This was a follow-up of an earlier research project we conducted in 2015 on (at that time) current AE programs to inform our own AE program revision process. In that initial 2015 search, we examined websites for AE programs’ curricula, program credit hours, and the number of faculty members. Our current AE program research began in 2022 and 2023 when we again conducted a website search, first reviewing all programs from our 2015 research list. We then expanded our research to a larger web-based search for any additional programs related to AE. We identified well-known and long-standing AE programs. However, with an expanded search, it became more difficult to identify possible additional related programs due to several factors. AE programs are often folded into larger departments. For example, at Cleveland State University, our Adult, Professional, and Higher Education (APHE) program is housed in the Counseling, Administration (K-12), Supervision, and Adult Learning Department (CASAL). We found that many AE programs are situated in departments that do not contain the words “adult education” in their title, and, in addition, their titles may highlight other specialties, making it challenging to know if AE is a related program. Examples of related programs may include Educational Administration, Higher Education, Psychology, Counseling, Leadership Studies, Human Resources Development, Professional Studies, and Lifelong Learning.

Compounding these difficulties, AE programs are often listed with or subsumed in Higher Education programming, making it problematic to identify the number of faculty in an AE program, as all department faculty may not focus on adult education. Finally, using the search term “adult education” not only results in graduate programs in AE but also includes a myriad of continuing education programs geared to adults. Finally, there may be newer programs that are currently not as well-known that we did not discover in our search.

Another issue with comparing our 2015 research and AE program list to our current search stems from many university reorganizations that have occurred, many post-COVID-19. For example, Cleveland State University has been reorganized, and our department has been moved from the College of Human Services and Education to the Levin College of Public Affairs and Education. Our new college now includes the former College of Education, Criminology, Sociology, and Communication Departments and the School of Urban Affairs. Our AE program has not gone through significant changes as a result of this reorganization. Still, it is more

difficult to find the APHE program on the university website in a college that includes a number of varied disciplines besides ours.

Higher Education Programs

Higher Education (HE) programs are often associated with AE. HE programs vary in title, but they usually focus on higher education leadership and administration, college teaching, student affairs, and/or counseling/advising. After a search of university websites within the state of Ohio and surrounding states, we identified 39 graduate programs with a focus on HE, of which only four were situated under the umbrella of adult education. We know HE graduate programs face challenges similar to those mentioned in our discussion above, yet we were able to identify strategies faculty and administrators have utilized to address such challenges and strengthen their programs. These strategies include, but are not limited to, partnering/situating struggling programs with reputable programs that already have strong enrollments. A positive outcome of COVID-19 was the realized success of online/remote teaching and learning. Flexibility within AE and related graduate programs (online, hybrid) may be a strategy to increase enrollment, hence strengthening programs.

Interestingly, the number of credit hours required to complete HE programs varied greatly among programs, ranging from 30 to 65 credit hours to graduate. Program faculty may want to gauge whether the number of credit hours required to graduate impacts the recruitment and retention of students. In addition, it wasn't clear if internships were required or optional for students; nonetheless, the majority of the 39 HE programs reviewed have some type of internship component. A multitude of concentrations (or certificates) exist within HE programs. Concentrations included career and academic advising; sports management; enrollment management; mind, brain, and learning; student development and affairs; academic support; college athletics leadership; strategic leadership; institutional effectiveness; leadership and administration; adult learner; counseling; diversity; technology; HE policy; legal issues in HE; and college teaching. Finally, it was evident that these HE programs market the uniqueness of their programs on their university websites. Some programs highlight environment or contexts, for example: urban; diversity, equity, and inclusion; experiential/contextual; community-based; and/or cohort-based learning. Others market the partnerships that exist with other disciplines/programs within their universities, while still other programs focus on internship, study abroad, graduate assistantship, and service opportunities. In many program descriptions, academics, low faculty-student ratios, small class size, faculty expertise, electives, and involvement in research were also emphasized. It would be beneficial for faculty and administrators to identify cost effective approaches to market AE and related programs, highlighting unique features that may attract potential graduate students.

Health Professions Programs

The final program area we examined was health professions education (HPE). There has been a marked increase in HPE over the past 50 years. In 2018, there were 37 US-based HPE programs and a total of 151 globally. In 2023, this number was listed as 157 globally with 52 situated in North America (Tekian et al., 2023). HPE programs (also called Medical Education or Health Sciences Education) are often partnerships with a number of disciplines (Artino et al., 2018), and they may be situated in a variety of different colleges or schools, including medicine and education. There is more clarity in the labeling of HPE programs than in other AE related programs, although some are listed as specialties within broader programming. Our findings

indicate that these collaborations are frequently among medicine, public health, nursing, business, and/or adult education. In addition to master's programs, there are a number of programs that offer graduate certificates in HPE. The increase in programming can be linked to a move to professionalize HPE (Artino et al., 2018).

Discussion and Conclusion

Recently, popular news sources have illustrated several issues that are affecting higher education institutions. Enrollment is down in graduate programs (Knox, 2023), college education has less importance attached to it, and costs have skyrocketed (Tough, 2023). AE and related programs are not immune to these challenges, and, mostly anecdotally, adult educators are aware of the issues AE programs face as well as of past and recent program closures. However, as adult educators with significant familiarity and experience in the field, we found it somewhat difficult to identify AE programs and trace their trajectories via web searches. This difficulty, in part, was due to the complexity of determining the exact number of program closures because of diverse program and department names for AE programs and, further, the consolidation of AE programs with similar programs (i.e., HRD, HE). In addition, university restructuring has buried AE programs in schools or colleges that do not necessarily highlight the presence of AE programming. The frequent confusion of AE graduate programs with continuing adult education programs/departments further illustrates the issues with AE program visibility.

As Hansman and Rose (2018) contend, the challenges to AE programs are historical and longstanding and, as recently discussed by Hill and Issac-Savage (2022) and Collins and Zacharakis (2023), are not new to the fields of AE or HE. Collins and Zacharakis highlighted the myriad of roles faculty may assume to maintain a program's viability (recruiter, marketer, innovator, entrepreneur). In lieu of administrative support, it is incumbent on program faculty to navigate these broader issues while recognizing and taking on the additional roles faculty are required to assume. But the question is: How can already busy and overloaded AE faculty members meet these competing demands for their time and energy?

In conclusion, AE education programs share common goals, but programs are tailored to the needs of their potential students as well as their local communities/contexts. Programs require different strategies to address their own challenges; however, it might be beneficial to identify strategies from related programs (i.e., HPE, HE, HRD) that can be applied across related programs.

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The “Ideal Type” Academic Advisor for Graduate Students in Education Programs

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Abstract: Academic advisors are crucial in higher education institutions, particularly at the graduate level. They provide students with guidance and support, helping them to navigate complex academic requirements and to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their field. This proposal explores the concept of the *Ideal Type* advisor, and these interviews refer to an advisor with the qualities and characteristics most effectively supporting and guiding graduate students in education programs. We interviewed four graduate students in education programs; these interviews provided valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions of advisors and their expectations and needs. Thematic analysis will analyze interview data and identify common response themes and patterns.

Keywords: academic advisor; graduate students; education programs; thematic analysis

Graduate-level academic advisors guide and advise their students to foster their success (McConnell, 2018). They support graduate students in learning about the academic discipline, the university environment, the research approach, ethics, and other significant facets of being an academic professional (Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004). Previous studies discussed that good academic advisors positively impact students' academic and personal growth. For instance, they can potentially improve graduate students' academic outcomes, self-efficacy, and overall satisfaction with graduate school experience (Miller, 2010; Razinkina et al., 2018; Tessema et al., 2012). The existing research mainly focuses on studying the characteristics of good advisors in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) departments (Welde & Laursen, 2008). However, fewer studies have explored the “Ideal type” of academic advisors in the education department. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the qualities and characteristics of an excellent academic advisor in education programs.

This study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the qualities and characteristics of the “ideal advisor” for graduate students in education programs. We interviewed four doctoral students in Adult Education, Music Education, and Education Psychology. Participants were asked to describe their relationship with their advisors and their expectations for their advisors. Their narratives provide diverse traits and characteristics of ideal-type advisors. We gathered those features that were important to graduate students' success and distilled them into essential traits of strong professional capability and humanitarian concern.

Literature review

The definition of university academic advisors varies across research, reflecting the role's development. In academic settings, academic advisors take on multiple responsibilities that are considered important to students' progress (Petress, 1996). Their responsibilities include academic advising, career guidance, graduation checks, and other issues affecting students' academic and emotional well-being. Scholars describe academic advisors as resource people who should be familiar with the department and university's rules and policies. They should also be aware of current job demands and labor market trends (Khalil & Williamson, 2014). Graduate students gain from formal and informal procedures that help them integrate into their departmental and disciplinary cultures. According to Lovitts (2022), graduate students

will have a positive and satisfying graduate school experience if their academic advisors help them construct cognitive maps of the program, the discipline, and the profession. As the program goes on, career guidance assumes an increasingly vital role. Academic advisors can help their students navigate the often-challenging transition from students to professionals by providing advice on job search strategies or assisting with networking.

Academic advisors are mentors supporting students through their academic journey and meeting their degree requirements (Lonn et al., 2012). For instance, academic advisors can guide course selection and help students learn the degree planning and program requirements. Although most programs offer a structured or suggested curriculum to develop professional skills and knowledge for graduate students, each student's needs are unique based on their career routes. A previous study shows that students perceived the most satisfaction from course-related information provided by their academic advisors (Sutton & Sankar, 2011).

Numerous existing studies show that a helpful academic advisor or a good advisor-advisee relationship benefits a student's academic success and personal growth (Barnes, 2009). For instance, Welde and Laursen (2008) discovered that an academic advisor who sets high standards, fosters independent work, and can ask for help with advising will help STEM graduate students find their "scientific feet." However, most previous studies focus on the characteristics of "ideal type" academic advisors in STEM departments. This proceeding aims to fill the gap by interviewing graduate students in education departments and exploring the characteristics and qualities of "ideal type" academic advisors from their perspectives.

Methodology

This proceeding is based on four interviews with graduate students from the Education Department at Auburn University. The demographic information for participants is in Table 1. The semi-structured interview lasted 30 to 50 minutes in duration. Respondents were assured confidentiality, and their identities were anonymized in this proceeding paper. Online interviews were conducted, and audio recorded through Zoom, which is a video-conferencing application. Participants would receive transcripts to check the whole interview within three workdays after interviewing. Once all interviews were transcribed verbatim, emerging themes were identified by the primary researcher. Then, the research group gathered to discuss the themes that each researcher had generated. The research group determined which central themes were recurring in each interview.

Table 1

Participants' information

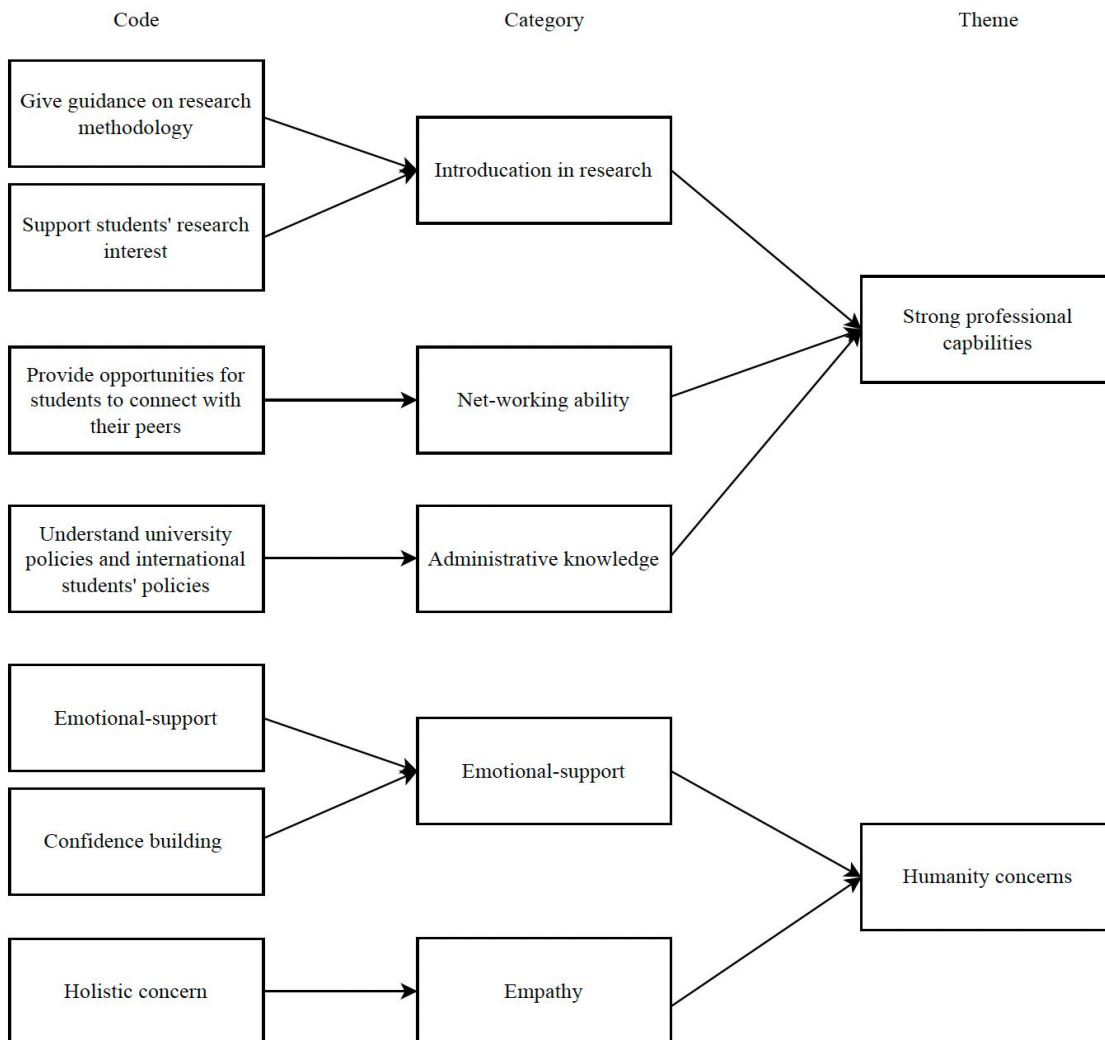
Participants	Gender	Age	Program	Years Spent in the Program
A	Female	29	Adult Education	3
B	Female	44	Education Psychology	4
C	Female	48	Education Psychology	4
D	Female	27	Music Education	2

Findings

We categorized two themes from participants' perceptions of the characteristics of "Ideal Type" academic advisors: strong professional capability and humanitarian concern. The coding process for themes is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Coding Process for Themes



Strong Professional Capabilities

All participants in this study believe that the “ideal type” academic advisor should possess strong professional capabilities. Some indicate that matching research interests with their academic advisor is not the main point when evaluating an advisor. However, their academic advisor should have a solid knowledge of the research methodology and master the theories or frameworks in their field. A graduate student told us about her opinion on research guidance, which she got from her advisor (see below).

I said I have a very good relationship with her. I did not mention she is very knowledgeable in the field, but of course, she is very knowledgeable. She is very productive and fruitful. This character may not be important for a teacher or an instructor, but as an academic advisor, I think this quality is on top of that.

Most participants present that their academic advisor gave them more freedom to choose the research topic they are interested in, unlike other graduate students in STEM programs.

I do not think that the match of research interests is a necessary point for an ideal type of advisor. My research interest is different from my advisor's. For instance, I am interested in exploring the influence of ChatGPT on students' learning outcomes, and this is a popular and novel research trend. Although my advisor is not interested in this topic, she still guides and supports my research design or methodology.

Two participants mentioned that they would feel satisfied and pleased if their academic advisor was familiar with the university policies. An academic advisor who knows policies well will provide more information for their students. An international student pointed out:

As an international student, I must register for at least nine credits each semester to keep my full-time student status. My academic advisor knows these policies and helps me plan my coursework and my workflow for proposal defense. She helps me to save my time and money. I really appreciate her.

Humanitarian Concern

Emotional support and confidence building from academic advisors increase graduate students' confidence and satisfaction. An international student said that she got a lot of power from her advisor's encouragement (e.g., "My advisor told me he admires me (laugh) for I study alone in a strange country. He said he could not imagine he could complete assignments in another language. I know he is joking, and he just encourages me. But I am still very happy to receive his affirmation").

Academic advisors' emotional support or encouragement will also make their students feel satisfaction and increase their self-esteem. A participant told us about her experience:

(My advisor) always provides emotional support to me, and she wants to me feel calm, feel better. I remember one thing; I asked her to write a recommendation letter for me. I read her recommendation letter; I feel like I am not as good as she praised me that much. She remembers every contribution and every hard work I had. It is not a general recommendation that can apply to every student. I feel so impressed by that.

Discussion

In this pilot study, graduate students in education programs believe that "Ideal Type" academic advisors should possess strong professional capabilities and have humanitarian concerns for their students for their students to communicate with their peers or other scholars. Existing studies explored the role of the academic advisor as the mentor in academic, research, and career fields. From this study, the perspectives of the ideal type of advisor among graduate students from education programs are consistent with the former study. The personal stories shared by participants illuminate the profound impact of humanitarian concerns. For instance, one participant's reaction to her advisor's praise of a recommendation impressed her with its personalized nature. Graduate students' expectations of academic advisors are more than getting academic guidance but also affirmation and inspiration.

Implications and Limitations

This pilot study discovered two themes for "Ideal Type" academic advisors from the perspectives of graduate students in education programs, and the findings for this study will provide recommendations and benefits for academic institutions and policy development. For instance, academic institutions may consider implementing in their advisory practices to meet student expectations.

However, this study has some limitations. The interview sample needed to be larger and involve more voices from male graduate students in the education program. Based on the current findings and limitations, future research will expand the variety of the populations with graduate students who have enrolled in their programs in different years.

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Working Through the Crisis: The Invisible Load of Emotional Labor on Higher Education Administrators During the Pandemic

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Abstract: Mounting work pressures brought on by the pandemic led to an escalation in the intangible responsibility of managing emotions, which in turn subjected leaders of higher education institutions to heightened levels of exhaustion, depression, and turnover. This phenomenological study sought to understand how senior leaders in higher education institutions described their engagement in emotional labor in response to their institution's approach to operating during the pandemic. Findings include leaders feeling unable to leave their positions, concealing their feelings, and engaging in surface acting, leading to higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: emotional labor, crisis leadership, higher education, surface acting, deep acting

The COVID-19 global pandemic crisis required higher education leaders to quickly enact policies and procedures to keep students, staff, and faculty safe while maintaining a modicum of basic operations. As the pandemic receded, attention was called to the inescapable responsibilities demanded of leaders during crises. Traumatic events, in addition to the pandemic, had significant implications for individuals' mental health (Magnavita et al., 2021). Leaders helped make decisions that deeply affected and changed the lives of students, staff, and faculty, as well as work that invoked humanity.

Quantifying the hours worked and decisions made during crises pales compared to the burden of emotional labor leaders perform during a crisis, primarily because emotional labor is associated with job burnout, illness, depression, and turnover (James & Wooten, 2022). Emotional labor is the process of shaping or suppressing true feelings to make them appropriate for a situation (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Higher education leaders engage in added emotional labor during crises, such as pandemics. To create environments that support higher education leaders' well-being, it is crucial to understand how senior leaders engaged in emotional labor to lead their institutions during the pandemic. The problem addressed in this study was to describe and understand how senior leaders in higher education institutions engaged in emotional labor in response to their institution's approach to operating during the pandemic, given their understanding of what feelings were appropriate or inappropriate for leading during the crisis.

Background

A crisis causes significant or atypical disturbance to regular routines. A substantial and prolonged crisis can cause people to feel shaken or respond by freezing up while trying to complete their duties. Fein and Isaacson (2009) state, "Normal human responses to crises leave most people feeling intermittently out of control, which does not dissipate just because we demand it to do so" (p.1328). The crisis storm affects everyone experiencing the phenomenon, especially when the crisis is prolonged, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

While leaders faced the same emotional responses as their subordinates during the pandemic, their role requires them to manage their feelings when actively leading. "Crisis are disorienting and unwieldy events for an organization and its leaders. These often senseless and complicated moments become crucible experiences for those with leadership responsibility" (Gigloitti, 2020, p. 2). For organizations to

weather crises, leaders must continue to lead while assuming additional responsibilities to address the crisis that challenges their leadership capacity (James and Wooten, 2022).

We used Hochschild's sociological framework of emotional labor to view leaders' experience of emotional labor. Emotional labor was conceptualized by Hochschild (1983): "To manage private loves and hates is to participate in an intricate private emotional system. When elements of that system are taken into the marketplace and sold as human labor, they become stretched into standardized social forms" (p. 13). Fein and Isaacson (2009) noted that emotional labor examines the "interplay between what a person feels and what he or she thinks is appropriate to feel in a certain situation" (p. 1328), meaning people manage or change their emotions to fit the behavioral expectations of their organization (Hochschild, 1979, 1983).

Hochschild's conceptualization of emotional labor includes two ways employees manage their emotions. Surface acting is a form of impression management wherein people conform to the expected display rules despite their feelings (Hochschild, 1989; Zapf, 2002; Fein & Isaacson, 2009). Deep acting is adapting or aligning feelings with an organization's expectations (Zapf, 2002; Fein & Isaacson, 2009). Surface acting takes a more significant toll on people due to the disparity between what they feel and how they are expected to behave (Zapf et al., 2021).

Methodology

We used a phenomenological study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to explore the lived experience of senior administrators in higher education during the pandemic. This study focused on understanding the phenomenon of being in a senior administrative position at a higher education institution during a global pandemic and understanding these leaders' lived experiences. The participant population for this study was selected using convenience sampling and included four senior leaders from public and private R-2 and R-3 four-year institutions who served in their roles throughout 2020 and were engaged in some form of decision-making that affected how the university operated during the pandemic and remained at the same institution. The participants represent three different institutions and serve as leaders in academics, student affairs, or advancement and enrollment.

Participants were interviewed via Zoom using a semi-structured interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that lasted an average of 60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed, and participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. Following the phenomenological process for data collection, the researchers assumed no priori categorization and personal bias, and previous knowledge was bracketed to a fresh view through the eyes of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Interview questions focused on participant experiences of serving in a leadership role during the pandemic and understanding their engagement with emotional labor.

Findings

When the B plot becomes the A plot

Participants described their engagement with leading during COVID-19, especially during the pandemic's beginning, as all-consuming. For all participants, COVID-19 became their focus in their work, with projects being cast aside to assume new duties often outside of their responsibility. Rather than their regular duties and agenda being the main plot point in their work story in 2020, COVID-19 became the main plot point. One participant shared about the change in focus, saying, "I feel so out of control in all things right now. Like, everything's an unknown at work. Everything is unknown in the world. It's everything felt untethered." Participants shared that when reflecting on their experience, they felt that getting their campus through the pandemic crisis was their number one priority.

You Can Check Out Any Time, But You Can Never Leave

As the pandemic progressed, participants recognized that they became disillusioned with their roles and institutions and began disassociating to continue doing their jobs. One participant shared multiple times that looking back at the time was "kind of a blur." Most describe not having the option to leave their

positions or even take a vacation. The lyrics from the hit song “Hotel California” best describe what these participants were feeling: “You can check out any time you would like, but you can never leave” (Henley et al., 1977). One participant reflected, “I didn’t reconcile it. I wasn’t able to.... It was cognitive dissonance at its greatest.”

Conceal Don’t Feel

Participants felt they had to suppress their emotions, especially as they ran counter to the organization’s narrative of how they should act and feel. Participants felt they often had to disassociate themselves or conceal their emotions to carry out their duties. Like Elsa in *Frozen*, participants thought they had to “conceal, don’t feel, don’t let them [others around them] know” (Menzel, 2013). One participant shared,

I was just trying to do my job. The emotions were not in it. It didn’t matter. Like, I didn’t matter. How I felt about something didn’t matter. How all the people felt about what was happening didn’t matter. So, I knew I wouldn’t matter.

Another participant shared,

It felt like I really had no power at all; it felt like on paper, I’m being told that I need to do this, and I’m being flattered for things that I’m doing well, but at the end of the day, other people are making decisions.

Participants expressed that suppressing their emotions regarding their work made them feel more emotionally exhausted, leading to further disassociation from their formal role.

Discussion

Leaders must prepare to manage their felt emotions when leading an institution during a crisis. While they may not always feel ready for a crisis, research indicates that crises will continue for higher education leaders (Gigliotti, 2020; James & Wooten, 2022). Despite the stress of COVID-19, leaders managed their feelings and engaged in deep acting when it came to their institution’s response to the pandemic. However, leaders seemed less able to engage in deep acting regarding the pandemic and other crises that occurred during the same time. As the pandemic and their jobs became the main storyline, these participants struggled to manage their emotions or engage in organizational display rules regarding these crises. They all felt that they had to hide their emotions and engage in surface acting to live up to their organizations’ expectations.

Leaders described healthy engagement in both deep acting and surface acting during the early moments of the pandemic. However, as the pandemic extended, participants reported cognitive disassociation with their roles and emotions around work. Some leaders described moments where it became clear that their organization cared more about the job than the person. However, no leader felt they could leave their role at that time, so they continued to surface act and dissociate with their emotions to survive.

Participants’ engagement in surface acting led to emotional exhaustion and disconnection from their jobs. While each participant had been in their role at least one year before the crisis, some felt overwhelmed by the emotional labor required to manage a prolonged crisis of the pandemic and the extra duties required of leaders. Each reported struggling to maintain the necessary work level and their emotions around their workload alongside the routine work required of their position. These extra duties and the additional needed emotional labor led all participants to express feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of their jobs, which can lead to burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), emotional exhaustion and depersonalization represent two of the three dimensions defining burnout, with the third being reduced personal accomplishment. Organizations should be mindful of the changes to a leadership role during a crisis and work to adapt to crises’ workloads to avoid their leaders burning out and leaving their institution.

As the pandemic ends and other crises loom on the horizon, it has become imperative that institutions examine leadership culture and create policies and structures that allow for self-care for leaders. Institutions should develop policies that draw boundaries around what is asked and expected of

individual leaders during crises (Fein & Isaacson, 2009). In addition, organizations should consider training new leaders in crisis management to provide a foundational framework for leaders to engage (James & Wooten, 2022). More systematic support for processing emotions may also help leaders process their feelings.

More emotional labor is required of leaders during a crisis. Personal values of what leadership is, organization culture, and increased workload contributed to leaders feeling undervalued and questioning their commitments to their positions and institutions. Employees seek employment congruent with their values (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). The results suggest that leaders who experience alignment with their institution's values will likely have lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Leaders need their organization's support to draw these boundaries and prioritize self-care amid crises to keep from experiencing burnout.

Organizations must also consider ways to redefine and communicate organizational priorities during a crisis. Organizational culture should encourage healthy work-life balance even during crises so leaders can operate fully. Organizations need to be mindful of the burden already placed on leaders and should proactively address things like budget or morale so that leaders can manage the crisis at hand (James & Wooten, 2022). Training on communication strategies and crisis leadership may better prepare leaders (Gigliotti, 2020).

Crises affect how institutions and leaders function, by interrupting the day-to-day business and forcing the leaders' attention to manage the crisis moment. Unfortunately, crises are not avoidable and are becoming more common. While leaders will always be held to a higher standard and must take on more work to lead the institution, institutions must help manage the emotional labor they ask leaders to engage in. In addition, institutions need to work to adjust culture and display rules to allow leaders to be human and care for themselves.

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McClusky's Theory of Margin: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Review for the 21st Century

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Abstract: In 1963, Howard Y. McClusky wrote the theory of margin, defining the personal ratio of power to load. Margin theory has been used to predict success; however, more research is needed to redevelop how this sixty-year-old theory is situated in the current environment. This grounded theory study examined the changes to margin by hybridization. Initial findings suggest that tasking is not the simple internal review of power and load, as suggested in the theory of margin. Instead, the hybridized environment adds additional factors of intensification and motivation drain brought on by omnipresent tasking and dynamic environments. These factors combine to create an additional environment-based term to the decades-old, one-dimensional theory.

Keywords: margin, load, power, intensification, multi-tasking, motivation

Academia has used McClusky's theory of margin (Lorge et al., 1963) as a predictor of success since its publication in 1963. However, no change to the fundamental theory has been evident in a literature review since publication. While hybrid learning through correspondence courses existed in the time of McClusky, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to online learning (Tritsch, 2021) that provided a challenge to margin theory not envisioned by McClusky. Exploration of the influence of technology on the experience of margin by an educator provides an avenue for inquiry that this study hopes to begin. As presented by Larson (1980), the theory of intensification is a point of entry for a discussion on load, while Vroom's (1964) theory of motivation is a point of entry for a discussion on power. Understanding the impacts on power and load allows for organizing the participants' experiences in a method that allows for redeveloping the theory of margin.

During the literature review on the topic of perceived load in the workplace, Larson's (1980) treatise on labor intensification stood apart in providing a lens for understanding load modification. Larson defines intensification as the increase in tasking with a corresponding decrease in task complexity. Larson presented the problem statement that intensification is an almost inevitable result of the streamlining of worker functions while simultaneously lamenting that the streamlining "elevates his or her specialized skills at the time it narrows the sphere of work and increases dependence on the bureaucratic whole" (Larson, 1980, p. 163). Larson discussed this topic through the lens of manufacturing, relating intensification to assembly line production. In this construct, Larson (1980) noted that higher-level workers—without the controlling functions of time clocks and union-mandated breaks—were subjected to an increased volume of work that "fills the pores" (Larson, 1980, p. 163) of the day. Fundamentally, the intensification process was "one of the most tangible ways in which the work privileges of educated workers are eroded" (Larson, 1980, p. 166). Larson (1980) referred to the standard professional privileges training, experimentation, and researching new techniques. Apple (1986) translated intensification into education, where teachers faced similar issues in the mid-eighties. Brookfield (2017) continues to chronicle hybrid challenges in his works.

McClusky (Lorge et al., 1963) defined power in his margin theory as consisting of a web of interacting factors: physical, social, mental, and economic all come together to determine the factors of power. According to McClusky's theory, for a person to feel appropriately occupied, their load-to-power margin should be 50% to 80%. Margin Theory further states that above 80% will lead to feelings of exhaustion, while lower than 50% will lead to feelings of boredom. It is possible to link motivation theory to McClusky's concept of power. Vroom's (1964) Theory of Motivation provided a research benchmark for the generation of power in an educator by applying expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy focuses on the individual's expectation of output related to the effort expended. Instrumentality reflects the value of the work an individual accomplishes by the individual. Valence focuses on the expectation of outsiders' recognition and validation of the work.

While there have been many changes to the educational landscape since 1963, it can be argued that the COVID-19 pandemic generated the most significant demand signal for change. Forced lockdowns, quarantines, and isolation effects that lasted for years required education to rapidly adopt extensive modality changes that would not have been considered before the pandemic (Carroll, 2021). Each tool requires training and learning its applications before educators use it. Significant changes to pedagogy and modality influenced educators' stress levels (Johnson & Maclean, 2008). The new tasks associated with multi-modal instruction required a host of new mundane skills—logins, video set up, camera and microphone maintenance—while viral containment reduced an educator's exposure to their prime motivator—contact with students.

This study aimed to redevelop margin by investigating the changes teachers faced through their first-person experiences. To set the frame of reference for the research study, the following terms require operationalization as their use is specific to this research study.

Load – The combination of internal and external factors involved with the usual requirements of living and social, civic, and work obligations (Lorge et al., 1963)

Power – The participant's internal perception of ability (Lorge et al., 1963)

Intensification – An increase in the number of tasks with a corresponding decrease in task complexity (Larson, 1980).

Hybrid Environment (hybridization) – A hybrid environment is any variant of educational experience that is not 100% traditional in-person, synchronous modality.

Background

Little study has been done on the interaction between margin and the environment. Instead, most studies focus on the interaction between the remaining margin and the prospect of success. Chronologically, Main (1979) conducted the first investigation of margin and stated that the power-load theory had yet to be integrated into any comprehensive teaching model. Most significant to this investigation was Main's (1979) comment that "The key to the concept of margin lies not only in the sub-concepts of load and power but even more in the relationships that exist between them" (p. 24).

Weiman (1987) was the first to bring the environment into the discussion through the exploration of external social and economic factors that impact academic performance. In this quantitative study of 28 participants, Weiman (1987) found no significant correlation between margin in life and social or economic load indicators. Weiman (1987) recommended developing better tools to determine if there is a relationship between margin and performance. By 1993, Hiemstra designated the margin theory as an underdeveloped model for adult learning, pointing out that if an instructor is not aware of this theory, they may generate an excessive load on a student. Hiemstra's (1993) association of performance with margin inspired two dissertations on the topic of margin equals success (Thul-Sigler, 2016; Trautman, 2004). These three works start to reflect the concept of intensification of the student's environment.

Maxfield (2009) shifted the research focus to qualitative methods and the asynchronous learning experience of non-traditional students and identified a theme of a need for flexible learning, marking the first indication of hybrid learning. What follows, in the literature, is a gap until 2021. In 2021, Biney evaluated the impact of margin on remote learners in Ghana as they balance the external needs of maintaining and keeping homes, playing leadership roles, and the demands of the workplace with the school's requirements. Biney (2021) also pointed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst for increased digital access. Though more than a decade apart, Biney's (2021) and Maxfield's (2009) research provides fertile grounds for redeveloping McClusky's margin theory in the modern digital environment.

Research Design and Data Analysis

The following questions bound the research study: How do adult learners compensate for lack of margin in a demanding work environment? How does technology influence the ability to multi-task effectively? What is the participants' state of well-being when they are using technology to multi-task?

This study used constructivist epistemology and grounded theory methodology to serve the research purpose and questions. Grounded theory provides a framework to define a new idea from participant experiences by constantly comparing all responses to each other until the data returns no new themes, thus reaching saturation. (Charmaz, 2017; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Levitt, 2021). In-vivo coding methods were selected to process the data to maintain the participant's voice, limit researcher subjectivity, and achieve the "detailed descriptions and explanations of lived experiences that are intended to be applied within a certain context" (Leavitt, 2021, p. 6).

The researcher selected an anonymous, web-based, short-answer format as the data collection vehicle for this study. Through deployment on Reddit and Facebook education forums by the moderators, any members of those forums had access to the survey; only the researcher had access to responses. A valid participant for the study required some formal teaching experience before 2019 and after 2021. One participant had no teaching experience in the timeframe targeted, which resulted in removal from the response pool. There was no pre-screening of participants. The researcher had no connection or personal knowledge of the specific backgrounds or demographics of the participants except for volunteered information in the personal responses. The researcher determined experience level and geographic location to be needed demographics for the purpose of diversity and collected this data as part of the survey.

The anonymous nature through which participants are discovered limits researcher subjectivity while maximizing the freedom to respond for the participants. As this study requires educators to be vulnerable, allowing for a safe, non-judgmental, non-attributional space to

respond supports clear and distinct retellings of participants' experiences. These data were collected between June 2022 and June 2023. This study received Institutional Review Board approval, and informed consent was mandatory for all recorded responses.

Using iterative data collection and coding allowed me to clump the data in batches and utilize in-vivo coding to discover themes. To maintain consistency of evaluation between batches, I utilized metasynthesis analysis. Saldana (2021) points to metasynthesis as a method for comparing themes between separate bodies of data. For example, when initially deployed on Facebook, the data collection vehicle generated a spike in responses, followed by a decline in interest and a renewed spike about two months later. Coding each spike independently and then combining it in metasynthesis allowed each group to retain its themes while combining those themes in the search for saturation central to grounded theory. (Charmaz, 2017; Glaser, 2007).

The main limitation of the study was the small sample size. Only eight participants responded to the data collection vehicle. The lack of participants was likely due to the limited time available to accomplish the study during an academic semester and the lack of penetration into the social media platforms on which the data collection vehicle resided. Charmaz and Glaser (2017, 2007) require data saturation for a valid grounded theory; this pilot research study did not achieve saturation. If approved for continued development into a dissertation, the researcher will utilize a broader network of social media platforms and a longer data collection timeline to pursue saturation.

Findings

Initial coding produced four themes: load on the teacher (12 codes), implementation of technology (8 codes), multi-tasking required by the teacher (14 codes), and the feeling of power of the teacher (4 codes). Data collected and coded shows clear experiences related to intensification and motivational impacts. Exceptional responses for each theme are presented.

Theme of Load: "The need to learn new platforms, programs, and apps was overwhelming and caused much stress." Theme of Implementation: "It was completely impractical to expect teachers to just seamlessly go from teaching in the classroom to teaching kids at home with no support." Theme of multi-tasking: "Multi-tasking is teaching in general. Watching every kid, all the time, answering a billion questions a day, planning, prepping, filling out paperwork, and contacting parents." Theme of Power: "I had to give myself permission to be 'less than excellent' in my own eyes."

Upon review of the research questions, this research study was partially effective. On the topic of how do adult learners compensate for lack of margin in a demanding work environment? The participants reported that they just pushed through the problem by allowing a less-than-perfect performance or running at a higher margin utilization rate, which they described as excessive stress in line with the base theory (Lorge et al., 1963). On the topic of how technology influences the ability to multi-task effectively, participants reported the exact opposite, with the clearest example of the lack of ability to multi-task listed above. The last question, the participants' state of well-being when using technology to multi-task, was not clearly answered and requires additional study.

Discussion

The themes of load and power reflect that educators are experiencing an intensified environment typified by frustration with their operating environment and an acceptance that they cannot

interact with their students as directly and personally as they once did (Apple, 1986; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Larson, 1980; Vroom, 1964). The following points summarize McClusky's theory of margin remains an understudied topic. Weiman's (1987) lack of correlation between socioeconomic indicators and load point to broad applicability. Hiemstra (1993) identified that the topic requires more study, indicating a lack of holistic understanding. Maxfield (2009) points to the critical need for educational flexibility and the roots of hybridization. Finally, Biney (2021) discusses the difficulty in balancing the intensifying effect education can have as workers try to offset labor intensification by increasing education. The expression of load and power in a hybridized environment reported by the participants in this study provides a new insight into the redevelopment of margin in the twenty-first century. Work remains in this study to finalize redevelopment of margin.

In a review of the dissertations that directly address McClusky's theory of margin, lateral literature reviews allowed the researcher to fill in gaps in understanding. In this lateral review of the core dissertations, the researcher discovered the theories of intensification and motivation. As the researcher reviewed the participants' stories, the theories of intensification and motivation began to align. During metasynthesis, individual batches of participants seemed to align with those without strong organizational support. Participants with strong organizational support showed lower intensification effects compared to their peers. This study found evidence to submit that a redeveloped version of McClusky's theory of margin should add a term describing the organization as it applied to a teacher's margin. The redeveloped theory of margin should be the traditional McClusky term of load divided by power with an additional term of intensification (organizational load) divided by motivation (organizational power). This term can be positive or negative, representing the organization's ability to add or subtract from a teacher's available margin.

Conclusion

Organizations need to understand that the minimum skill, repetitive tasks that epitomize intensification rob teachers of margin. For example, multiple steps by the teacher to set up the hybrid environment for teaching for every class session robs the teacher of teaching time and interaction time with the students. When deploying new technology, administrators should increase the integration of systems before launch and provide technical and administrative support to the teachers after launch. Focusing on motivation, the source of power for teachers, increasing efforts to build instrumentality, valence, and expectancy enriches motivation and rebuilds margin. An administration that was supportive and rewarding of innovation showed positive responses from participants who expressed higher levels of motivation and, therefore, higher available margin. The redeveloped second term of the margin can be positive or negative. The orientation of that mathematical value is up to the organization. Making the value positive by implementing intensification reduction and motivation improvement will generate a higher available margin for those that matter most—the students.

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Profound Moments: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the construct of a profound moment. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interpretive phenomenological approach. Interviews were transcribed, coded, analyzed, and considered in the analysis. Four themes were identified from the analysis: accepting what is, change of life axis, human connecting, and a crystallizing process. Participants expressed a singular moment that changed their lives and became a referential point for life choices and actions as they developed profound learner practices.

Keywords: adult learning, meaningfulness, profound moment, humanity, profound learning

Our lives are a series of experiences that shape the lens of our world perspective. Sometimes, major events create major disequilibrium that results in growth, ultimately contributing to our vertical development (VD) as adults (Henning, 2011). Researchers found that exceptionally meaningful events are often described as intense, with high emotions, and require deep reflection (Murphy & Bastian, 2020). We believe highly emotional, intense moments that result in continual reflection over time and inform life decisions shape us profoundly.

Literature Review

We grounded our conception of a profound moment (PM) with theoretical concepts of profundity and profound learning (PL) (Kroth & Carr-Chellman, 2018, 2020; Carr-Chellman & Kroth, 2018). Our conceptual framework postulates that a PM involves developing PL skills to accept the reality of a lived experience and a change of life trajectory through a process that deepens connection to humanity (Maib et al., 2021). Our framework draws from existing literature on PL (Carr-Chellman & Kroth, 2018; Kroth, 2016; Kroth & Carr-Chellman, 2020) and concepts of adult VD (Cook-Grueter, 2004; Kegan, 1982; Loevinger, 1976). A profound learner is “someone who pursues deeper knowledge regularly over time” (Kroth, 2016, p. 29). Practices and characteristics aligned with PL include regular reflection on life, social perspective taking, and actively pursuing deep knowledge that may challenge their current world perspectives (Carr-Chellman & Kroth, 2018).

Adult VD is a psychological framework that delves into how adults continue to mature cognitively and emotionally throughout their lives (Cook-Grueter, 2004) to expand capacity of self-reflection and interpersonal understanding (Loevinger, 1976), develop self-awareness, moral reasoning, and increase ability to handle paradox (Cook-Grueter, 2004). Girgis et al. (2018) contended that adults who reach higher stages of development become objectively aware of their emotions and beliefs. Vertical Development Theory (VDT) (Jones et al., 2020) implies that adults at higher stages of development retain their confidence to act responsibly while questioning their assumptions and accepting paradoxes.

Methodology

The goal of this paper was to disseminate findings from our continued qualitative exploration of components that make up PMs by interviewing additional research participants. The research team consisted of a professor and several doctoral students studying lifelong learning. The team received IRB approval to conduct this study prior to recruiting participants.

Participants were selected using purposeful convenience “typical case” sampling (Patton, 2015, p. 268); participants were perceived to be information-rich based on knowledge of their experiences to date. Members of the research team contacted potential participants to inquire about their interest in participating in the study. Eight participants, ages 34 to 70, were interviewed for data collection. All participants were cis-gendered, four identified as male, and four identified as female. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interpretive phenomenological approach (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), recorded and transcribed. Each 60-minute interview was conducted by a minimum of two researchers and utilized a three-step phenomenological interview approach (Bevan, 2014) to learn about the participants’ PM, identify core elements, and derive meaning (King & Hicks, 2021).

Data Analysis

Focus coding was first conducted independently (Charmaz, 2014) and second in teams (Locke et al., 2022). The categories and representative quotes were transferred to an online collaborative whiteboard to identify patterns, resulting in four preliminary themes: accepting what is, change in life axis, human connection, and a crystallization process. Each theme had four subcategories (see Figure 1). Participants’ PM Summaries:

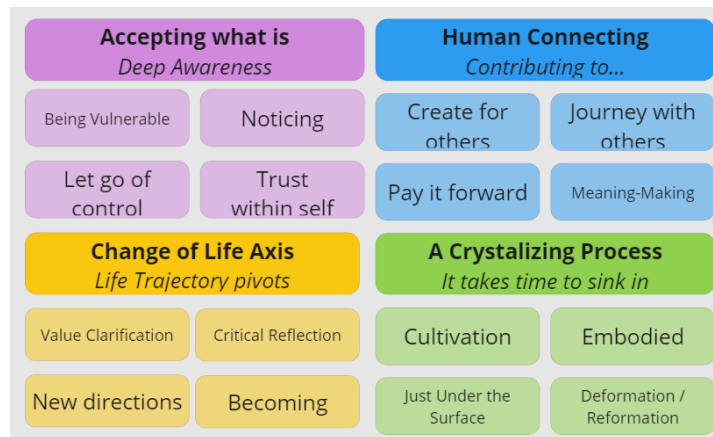
1. Brendan: chose to break from tradition and move across the country away from family after high school seeking intrapersonal growth.
2. Jesse: their young daughter was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer that needed their full attention through rapid developments and complex medical decision making.
3. Todd: opened to a solo meditative experience that led to a new way of thinking.
4. Tary: Life-changing study abroad experience as a teenager.
5. Pat: An off-hand remark by a fiancé suggested that they were an intellectual “lightweight,” which led to Pat adopting a life mission to demonstrate their cerebral strength.
6. Taylor: was denied promotion and tenure despite clearing every institutional checkpoint.
7. Jan: Lost their sister in a tragic accident that led Jan to evaluate how they live life.

Findings

Our analysis determined four common elements of a PM: accepting what it is, change of life axis, human connecting, and a crystallizing process (Figure 1). Accepting was signified as an attitude of open recognition of an experience without judgment or trying to change the experience. Over time, participants learned to trust themselves and “embrace the struggle” (Brendan). The PM experience prompted a change in life trajectory; participants divulged that a new life pathway resulted from reflecting on their PM. Human connection involves choosing community and seeking meaningfulness through intentional communication. Through continued practice of deformation and reformation, life behaviors became crystallized; a slow, ongoing process often accompanied by resistance, yet facilitated by self-awareness, openness, and humility.

Figure 1

Elements of a Profound Moment



Accepting what is – Deep Awareness

Participants accepted the reality of their situation without blame or denial. To do that, each participant conveyed vulnerability by expressing intense feelings and sharing emotions. Jesse's PM involved a medical emergency. Giving self-grace and choosing the healing process led Jesse to seek help from a therapist to process the experience and reach acceptance. Like other participants, Jesse learned to let go of control while staying present and engaged. Jesse stated, "I grew in my acceptance of, you can't control everything, life just comes at you. You have to be present and deal with it." Participants noticed behaviors, their own and others, with new clarity and without self-judgment, building self-trust by believing in their ability to manage their lives. Brendan shared the importance of growth and accepted that some "relationships aren't going to grow." He expressed the importance of accepting relationships "for what they are, then experience a little bit of discomfort around it."

Change of Life Axis – Life Trajectory Pivots

A PM fueled significant change in life direction for participants. Taylor questioned their professional vocation when a lifelong dream career path abruptly and unexpectedly ended. Taylor mentioned learning "to slow down and then understand the importance of the people who were there to support and help along the way." Participants pivoted their life trajectories through critical reflection and value clarification by questioning personal values and intentionally learning from the experience. Jan's sister courageously modeled finding joy after surviving a tragic accident that resulted in quadriplegia, which led Jan to evaluate individual life choices, clarify values, and search for inner joy. Jan stated the importance "To not have to wait for quadriplegia, before I experienced, whatever my version of sobriety is, whatever it means to actively participate in my own life, and actively seek my own joy."

Human Connecting – Contributing to...

Participants recognized others who were also on a journey either through their shared struggle or through the support they provided, and they connected with others to create meaning from their PM experience. Meaning making became a life focus for Jesse. "I don't do anything that I don't feel has meaning or isn't helping someone. I'm very motivated to make a positive difference." Participants were propelled by a strong desire to pay it forward either by creating positive

experiences for others to participate in or protecting others from suffering a specific negative life experience. Through a solo meditative experience, Todd awakened to a new way of thinking; their life work as a wilderness guide now focuses on creating for and journeying with others. Todd said, “I’m moving into developing it entirely for others. ... where I’m trying to let it work so that I can help those moments emerge in other people's waking lives.”

A Crystallizing Process: It Takes Time to Sink in

It took time for the PM experienced by all our participants to crystallize, in some cases decades after the experience. An announcement heard overhead at high school started our study participant, Tary, on a path to actualizing a foreign exchange experience in Mexico that led to a career teaching English as a second language and a lifetime of advocacy work. Fifty-three years later, Tary recalled vivid memories of the PM during the interview process. Brendan’s words demonstrate embodiment, “I think it’s [PM] the integral definition of who I am.” Pat reflected on their crystallization process as cultivation for continued intellectual growth, “I think that path of trying to get information, trying to find research, trying to use evidence, I’ve used it. I’ve used it a lot in my interpersonal relationships.”

Discussion

The four themes in relation to the construct of a PM include accepting what is, change of life axis, human connection, and a crystallizing process aligned with the adult learning and VD literature (Henning, 2011; Jones et al., 2020; Kegan, 1982) and transformational learning theory (TL) (Mezirow, 1991). Our findings indicate that PMs are distinct concepts from the existing body of literature (Mezirow, 1991; Carr-Chellman et al., 2019). Participants use PMs as a continual reference point for making decisions as a foundation to inform life practices as the individual develops into a PL. Yet not all those who practice PL will experience a PM.

Accepting what is – as a deep awareness of the reality of the situation without blame. The situation involves vulnerability, such as expressing feelings, sharing emotions, seeking professional help if appropriate, recognizing humanity, and normalizing mistakes. Vulnerability prompts noticing behaviors and related meaning with clarity and without self-judgment. Participants intentionally engage with the PM in a process indicative of movement through VD stages (Cook-Grueter, 2004).

The second element, change of life axis – life trajectory pivots, found that life change for our participants starts with value clarification and intentional learning from the experience to inform their future. Highly emotional events can lead to critical reflection on life values resulting in profound changes as people seek meaning and growth (King & Hicks, 2021). Jayawickreme and Blackie (2014) reported that intense events provide an opportunity to restructure a person’s perceptions of the world. Our results indicate that a PM characteristic is a life trajectory pivot that goes beyond incorporating new knowledge into their worldview.

The third element, human connecting, reveals that even though a moment may end relationships, participants move on to develop healthier relationships. Rather than being alone, participants chose to be with others (Henning, 2011) with a desire to *engage in social generativity* (Erikson, 1982). A strong desire to pay it forward by creating positive experiences or protecting others from suffering propels participants to action and supports ego development theory (Cook-Grueter, 2004) and VDT (Jones et al., 2020).

The final element of a PM, a crystallizing process – it takes time to sink in, aligns with adult VD. Over time practices and values from the PM become an integral part of each participant, alluding to higher stages of adult VD (Jones et al., 2020). For some study participants, it took years after the experience for the moment to sink in. According to Bunting (2023), “With vertical growth we explore downward in ourselves to resolve our deep-seated assumptions, fears and patterns in order to grow upward into our best selves” (p. 1). Although a PM embeds deep in the individual, shaping who they are becoming, vivid memories of the moment live just under the surface.

Participants' identities change as they embody new perceptions of self and reality (Miller, 2004) through a deformation and reformation process of deeper learning (Kroth, 2016). As participants overcome obstacles and move to higher stages of development, they accept the realities of their PM. The process of revisiting PMs signifies how a moment becomes embedded into an individual's self-concept through a process that was painful, problematic, puzzling, accepted, and finally mastered (Stiles et al., 1990).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the scholarly literature on adult learning with strong indications that PMs lead to a healthier perspective on life and embrace four common elements: accepting what is, change of life axis, human connection, and a crystallizing process. A story that lacks one of these elements may indicate the moment has not been assimilated into a person's worldview or that the moment has not fully permeated. PMs appear to be a unique touchstone of meaning-making intentionally integrated into life choices over time. We believe that not all PLs experience a PM, yet PMs function as a catalyst for becoming a PL. Despite sharing some aspects with other phenomena in the literature, the continual nature of revisiting a moment differentiates PMs. A transformational moment (Mezirow, 1991) may catalyze PL practices but does not continue to inform the meaning making process over a lifetime; a key feature of a PM.

A practice for adult educators is to teach journal writing and self-reflection to guide students on a journey of learning from intense emotional experiences. This Andragogical approach fosters personal growth and self-awareness as adult learners are invited to write their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to a highly emotional experience. The writing process provides an outlet for the often-overwhelming surge of emotions associated with intense experiences and helps to unravel complex emotions that have the potential to change personal perspectives on life events. Reflection is a component of developing PL practices (Kroth & Carr-Chellman, 2018). An educator can guide adult learners through a journey of introspection, encouraging them to revisit their experiences with a critical eye. Using this practical application to help students develop a holistic understanding of their experience through self-reflection empowers them to navigate future situations with greater resilience and emotional intelligence.

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Siblings' Experience of a Childhood Severe Illness Diagnosis: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: Siblings of children with a severe illness diagnosis experience childhood differently than their same-age peers. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe an adult's understanding of their childhood experiences when their sibling was diagnosed with a severe illness. In prior studies, researchers engaged proxies, such as parents, to express the experience of the siblings living with an ill child. Few researchers waited until the siblings matured to adulthood to assess the impact on their lives. The sibling's voice is needed to illuminate their unique experience. Findings from this study may help healthcare providers, social workers, and educators support siblings of ill children.

Keywords: sibling, childhood illness, development, adjustment, family system

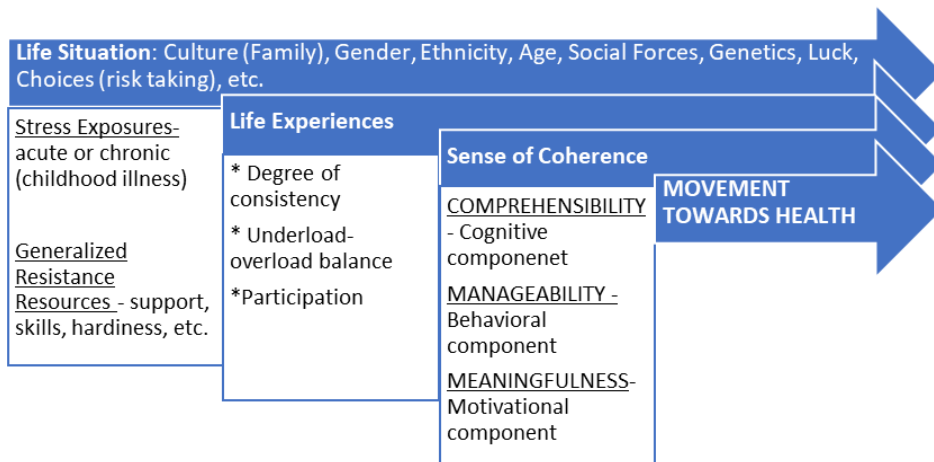
A childhood severe illness diagnosis impacts the entire family, yet siblings end up in the shadow that is created by the necessary and immediate focus on medical treatment for the ill child as well as keeping the parents medically informed (Heaton et al., 2022). "Sibling relationships are one of the most long-lasting and influential relationships in a human's life" (Tay et al., 2022, p. 517). Siblings' experience of a severe childhood illness has been primarily explored without directly talking to them. Consequently, conclusions drawn from existing data often include the perspective of parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals. Although useful, an adult bystander perspective does not adequately describe the healthy sibling's experience.

Studies have assessed the experience of a severe illness from an ill child's perspective (Clark, 2003; Nabors & Liddle, 2017) and reported the impact of childhood illness on family members in general (Patterson et al., 2003). Few published research studies specifically describe the effect of severe illness on an ill child's siblings. Of these studies, most did not wait until the sibling had matured to adulthood for them to be interviewed. Most studies used surveys, questionnaires, or interviews with a proxy, such as a parent, to assess the sibling's experience (Patterson et al., 2003). The purpose of this study is to explore and describe an adult's understanding of their childhood experiences when their sibling was diagnosed with a severe illness. We spoke directly to the siblings and shared their voices in our findings.

Literature Review

We framed this research using Bowen's Family Systems Theory (BFST) (Calatrava et al., 2021), the concept of salutogenesis, and a model of health (Antonovsky, 1979). Sociologist Antonovsky created the Salutogenic Model of Health (SMH) (Fig. 1) to understand why some people experience illness and others have good health after exposure to the same pathogenic agent or life stressor (Benz et al., 2014, p. 17). A core concept of the salutogenic model is Sense of Coherence (SOC), a disposition that makes some people more resilient when faced with life stressors (2014). Differentiation of Self (DoS) is the core concept in Family Systems Theory; it suggests that some people are better able to remain objective in the presence of intense family stress (Calatrava et al., 2021).

Figure 1. *Modified salutogenic model, based on Antonovsky (1979)*



Fleary and Heffer (2013) explored the effect of living with a sibling who was ill during childhood on healthy children's functioning during late adolescence (18-21 years old). They found that there are adverse psychological effects experienced by a healthy child when exposed to an ill sibling growing up. Knecht et al. (2015) conducted a comprehensive literature review aimed at gaining a broad overview of research related to siblings' life experiences with a childhood illness diagnosis and concluded that most available data on siblings' perspectives comes from a proxy and not directly from the siblings. The authors recommended further research concentrate solely on the siblings' perspective. Sibling's experience of a childhood severe illness diagnosis has been primarily conducted without directly talking with the affected sibling. In studies where the siblings were asked to self-report either by completing a questionnaire or in the setting of a focus group or a play interview, the data collected differed from that provided by their proxy (Lummer-Aikey & Goldstein, 2021).

Methodology

We explored how siblings of a child with a severe illness experienced events that unfolded during the diagnosis, treatments, and the years that followed using a descriptive narrative approach, specifically interpretive description (ID). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), "The study of narrative is the study of ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). As the data was collected, narrative inquiry allowed for emerging aspects of the study design (Bruce et al., 2016).

The primary researcher received IRB approval before recruiting the participants using purposeful convenience sampling. All participants were adults at least eighteen years old who were children when their child sibling received a severe illness diagnosis. We contacted previous beneficiaries of an annual event that raises awareness of severe childhood illness called Jacey's Race (Lawson & Scott, 2022) by email to participate in the study. The first five respondents who met the selection criteria were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. The five participants interviewed represented four families, all identified as female and ranging in age from 19 to 30 years. The severe illnesses represented were cancer (2) and congenital malformation (2). Data analysis was iterative, using constant comparison and thematic analysis to analyze the data looking for core narratives and themes across all transcripts. The data was

classified inductively using the integrated code structure described by Dr. Leslie Curry and others (Bradley et al., 2007).

The ID methodological framework was used to examine the subjective experience of siblings of children with a severe illness to identify themes and patterns among the siblings' subjective perspectives and recognize variations between individuals. "ID is grounded in an interpretive orientation that acknowledges the constructed and contextual nature of human experience" (Burdine et al., 2021). The interviews lasted up to sixty minutes and were conducted virtually over Zoom. Researchers used Otterai to transcribe the audio recordings verbatim. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts, and each participant was assigned a unique pseudonym. Individual codes were collected on a cumulative Excel sheet where themes, categories, and narrative blocks were identified. The cumulative Excel code sheet was additionally color-coded. The five themes or narrative blocks identified in this study are: shrinking safety net- lack of attention and missing parents, developmentally inappropriate roles - contributing to confusion/fear, children are still human- helpful and unhelpful adult behaviors, sense of support- the importance of choosing a compassionate response and, tune into humanity- awareness of personal challenges relative to other humans.

Findings

As noted above, five themes emerged from our data worth in-depth discussion: shrinking safety net, developmentally inappropriate roles, children still being human, sense of support, and tune into humanity.

Shrinking Safety Net- Lack of Attention and Missing Parents

Adults were understandably distracted by necessities brought on by their child's severe illness. The disruption of family routines contributed to the children feeling anxiety. Max stated, "We were very stressed and trying to put pieces together on our own." Avery revealed that because the family was at the doctor's office so much for one child's illness, their own diagnosis was delayed because neither the parents nor the medical staff was focused on the healthy sibling. All their attention was focused on the already identified ill child. Avery said, "I thought it was just normal to be going to the doctors all the time." Cameron expressed anxiety about knowing the adults were keeping information to themselves, "There was just a lot of fearfulness in the unknown. What was happening?" All participants acknowledged the seriousness of their sibling's diagnosis and could identify specific times in their lives when a childhood illness in the household made life more stressful.

Developmentally Inappropriate Roles- Contributing to Confusion/Fear

The first narrative block identified was confusion/fear, which led to the synthesis of the theme of developmentally inappropriate roles. Max confided, "We would try to help out more. I would go put the baby to bed and stuff like that." One of the siblings was the oldest in the family and, at eight years old, was responsible for preparing meals for their father and other siblings when their mother was at the hospital with their ill sister.

Children are Still Human – Helpful vs Unhelpful Adult Behaviors

Grandparents and other family members were identified as helpful. Max stated, "I remember my dad's parents, my grandparents. When [my sibling] was having surgery, and we flew to a different state for the surgery, they came over to hang out with us while he was in surgery, and my parents were busy." "I think when my grandparents [arrived, I knew] that they would be there to help me through this," explained Cameron. The community was also seen as supportive, "In our church, some members would bring us meals that they had made, which was helpful," recalled Carter of her memory of the experience. Avery stated, "There were a lot of people in our community willing to step up and help."

The participants felt that the travel time to treatments or hospital visits was not helpful. Max stated *We moved. We still lived about 45 minutes to an hour away from the hospital where my brother was.* Carter recognized that the negative of the hospital travel distance was lessened by having a nice

place for the family to stay (Ronald McDonald House) when they needed to be close to the hospital. Other negative experiences included the absence of both parents, expressed by Carter, *That was the first time I had been away from my parents in my life*. The absence of one or both parents may have influenced the participants' statements surrounding the desire for more attention during their sibling's illness. *I think we felt like we were being emotionally neglected at some point, just because all of the attention was always on him*, was reflected by Max and shared by Cameron, who said, *I think I definitely rebelled and for reasons why I don't fully know but maybe it was to get attention or have more spotlight on myself even though it wasn't the kind of spotlight I would want*.

Sense of Support- Importance of Choosing a Compassionate Response

Mothers were seen as a universal source of support in this cohort of participants. Cameron stated, "I think it was definitely the support of my mom and her closest friends and relatives." Carter shared,

Because my mom is a physical therapist, she has a stethoscope. She would put it on my sister's heart. We would hear how it made a whooshing noise. It was different from my heartbeat and my mom's heartbeat. Therefore, it didn't feel scary to me. It was more just like, oh, this is interesting. This is like a fun fact.

Additionally, three participants identified the dad's role as supportive. *I think my dad kind of explained it to me and my siblings*, Max recalled. Atlas remembers her dad intervening after she purchased a large bag of candy to help her sister gain weight, *and then my dad had to be like, hey, this is cool and everything, but this isn't for us. We need her to be a certain weight so that the surgery can go well*. Another type of support was identified through camp experiences. Summer camps designed to include other family members in addition to the ill child were described by Cameron and Avery as supportive, safe places to be and to express feelings.

Tune into Humanity- Awareness of Personal Challenges Relative to Other Humans

Participants gained a broader perspective. Again, Max shares, *Raise the siblings to [understand that] it can be exhausting for your siblings to always stand up for themselves. So, if you see someone like that, step in, show them, and teach them. Don't be cruel but educate them*. All participants expressed gratitude for the people who entered their lives because of their sibling's illness and greater empathy after their experience. Carter shared, *I think maybe the main thing is, it's made me more understanding of other people who have illnesses or a family with a major illness*. Avery conveyed, *I think that it also helps me to be a more compassionate nurse and know what people are going through. You see them in the hospital all the time*.

An unexpected finding was that many of the participants developed a severe illness themselves before the age of twenty-five. They recognized that their experience of living with an ill sibling influenced how they approached and managed their own illness.

Discussion

The study results indicate an impact on siblings when a child is diagnosed with a severe illness and build on previous work describing siblings' experiences in a family with a severe childhood illness diagnosis. Cancer is the primary severe illness studied in most research on siblings and childhood illnesses. A scoping review by Tay et al. (2022) acknowledged that of the studies they evaluated, approximately 30% explored self-reported experiences of siblings of children with a non-cancer diagnosis. In the study described in this paper, 50% of the severe illness diagnoses were non-cancerous. Another design element unique to this study is that the researcher asked the siblings interview questions after an expansion of time since diagnosis, allowing them to express their childhood experiences from their adult perspective.

Siblings of children with any severe illness must learn to manage stressors like the disruption of daily routine, physical changes in their ill sibling, fear of the unknown, and parental expressions of anxiety. Tay et al. (2022) suggested that additional research is still needed to gain more insight into the causes of distress expressed by siblings of children with severe illness. The current study helps to answer

this call for more data by identifying confusion and fear as contributing factors to a sibling's distress. The suffering felt by healthy siblings in the absence of one or both parents created a need for additional attention and a perceived disparity of attention received between the healthy and ill siblings, as supported in the current literature (Hanvey et al., 2022).

A helpful behavior identified in this study and described by Moon et al. (2021) is treating each child in the family as unique. Moon et al. (2021) recommended that healthcare providers support the differentiation and individual identities of the child with severe illness and their siblings. "The difference between siblings can be considered meaningful" (p. 7). Inconsistent with the results from this study, Moon et al. (2021) also reported that sibling rivalry scores increased as the siblings aged and were associated with aggressive and coercive behavior. The participants in this study categorically expressed deep love and admiration for their ill siblings, presumably because maturation to adulthood allowed them to tune into humanity in a way that the children and adolescents interviewed in the Moon et al. study were not yet able to.

All but one participant developed what could be described as a severe illness before the age of 25. This finding was unexpected and should be explored in future studies. The additional knowledge gained from this study could lead to better systems for mitigating the negative impact of the disease on the siblings and more positive psychosocial outcomes for the entire family. Therefore, based on the results of this study, adults interacting with families with a child with a severe illness diagnosis need to engage directly with the siblings in the family to alleviate confusion by assessing their understanding of the diagnosis and answering any questions they have without inflaming fear. They also need to evaluate the support systems available for each unique family member, ensure that they are adequate, and increase awareness for potential significant illnesses occurring in siblings.

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Academic Advisors' Mental Health, Burnout, and Resilience

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to determine if there are statistically significant relationships between academic advisors' demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, burnout, and risk for mental health disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) or major depressive disorder (MDD). In February 2023, we conducted a national survey of academic advisors ($n = 1,598$). Advisors with higher levels of burnout had increased odds of experiencing MDD and GAD symptoms. Resilience was significantly correlated with lower MDD, GAD, and burnout levels.

Keywords: burnout, academic advisors, resilience, mental health, organizational context factors

The rapid spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the ensuing pandemic brought about immense changes in higher education institutions. Many college and university leaders rapidly adjusted their operations to curb the transmission of the virus. While most colleges and universities have since returned to pre-pandemic levels of operations, the disruption stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting impact on higher education. Researchers have seen significant upheaval in the higher education labor market as over 50% of employees will likely leave their positions next year (Bichsel et al., 2022). Although employees who work in education are the second-most group of burned out employees in the United States (Marken & Agrawal, 2022), scholars have not examined academic advisors' burnout or outcomes of burnout, including mental health disorders. Elevation in burnout and reduction in resilience during the pandemic may have culminated in increased levels of depression or anxiety among academic advisors, thus diminishing their ability to effectively support students (Koutsimani et al., 2019).

The purpose of this study is to examine the variables associated with academic advisors' burnout and their risks of major depressive disorder (MDD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). The research questions guiding this study are as follows: 1) are there statistically significant relationships between academic advisors' demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, and level of burnout? 2) are there statistically significant relationships between academic advisors' demographic characteristics, advising-related variables, burnout, resilience, and advisors' symptoms of MDD and GAD? In this paper, we discuss the supporting literature, the design research methodology, and the survey data analysis. We also discuss the results and implications for future research.

Literature Review

Burnout poses significant risks to individuals' overall health and well-being because burnout is associated with decreased physical health (Peterson et al., 2008) and increased risk for GAD and MDD (Koutsimani et al., 2019). Academic advisors play a critical role in college students' success: they help students navigate the culture of higher education, direct students to essential resources and services, and foster students' sense of belonging (Soria, 2012). Moreover, academic advisors promote various positive outcomes, including students' academic achievement, retention, learning outcomes, academic and career planning, self-efficacy, and overall success in higher education (2012). Therefore, attrition and turnover in academic advising positions may significantly disrupt college students' outcomes and trajectories.

The variables we explored in this research are interrelated: burnout is positively correlated with higher rates of MDD and GAD (Koutsimani et al., 2019), so the rise in burnout among higher education employees poses a concern for their mental health. Research about academic advisors' mental health is

essential because of the effects of mental health disorders on individuals and institutions. Individuals who experience MDD and GAD are more likely to experience impairments in their overall quality of life, poorer physical health, increased sleep disruptions, limitations in social activities, a general sense of fulfillment, and reduced holistic well-being (Hoffman et al., 2008).

Conceptual Framework

We used Maslach et al.'s (2001) conceptualization of burnout, Fink's (2014) integrated model of mental health, and Glover et al.'s (2020) model for identifying and mitigating the equity harms of COVID-19 policy interventions as frameworks for this study. Burnout is a psychological syndrome that manifests after prolonged exposure to chronic stress, and three dimensions of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Fink's integrated model of mental health considered individual, interpersonal, and institutional factors related to individuals' mental health (2014). Glover et al. (2020) illustrated how pandemic-related policies negatively affected those already marginalized and disenfranchised before the pandemic. We utilized all three models in our research design and selection of variables.

Research Design

Instrument

In February 2023, we administered a survey to 8,122 individuals who were listed as professional academic advisors on over 1,300 two-year and four-year institutional websites. We collected the names and email addresses of the advisors via web scraping techniques and received IRB approval to conduct this study.

Participant

In total, 2,566 advisors (31.6%) from 737 unique two-year and four-year institutions representing all 50 U.S. states responded to the survey. One-third ($n = 777$) were randomly assigned to respond to items related to mental health, and one-third ($n = 821$) were randomly assigned to respond to the items associated with burnout. We did not have any missing data in the sample. Respondents from both modules predominantly identified as cisgender women (75.9% mental health and 75.2% burnout), White (77.5% mental health and 73.6% burnout), with a master's degree (72.2% mental health and 74.2% burnout) and an average age of 40 ($SD = 10.5$ mental health and 10.4 burnout).

Measures

Dependent Variables

Our dependent measures included items from the PHQ-2 instrument (Kroenke et al., 2003) to screen for MDD symptoms and items from the GAD-2 instrument (Kroenke et al., 2007) to screen for GAD symptoms. The PHQ-2 and GAD-2 each include two questions about depression and anxiety experiences over the past two weeks (scaled from 0 = not at all to 3 = nearly every day). The PHQ-2 and GAD-2 are clinical mental health screeners, not diagnostic tools.

We used a three-item abbreviated scale of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (Gabbe et al., 2002) to measure the three dimensions of burnout. Emotional exhaustion includes fatigue, a loss of energy, or feelings of depletion. Depersonalization features negative attitudes towards the individuals employees serve. Reduced personal accomplishment or professional inefficacy occurs when individuals have lower workplace productivity. All items were measured on the same scale: 0 = never to 6 = every day.

Independent Variables

Both modules included demographic variables related to gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age, disability, and level of education. Advising-related variables included the number of students the advisors advise per academic year (mental health $M = 382.93$, $SD = 426.13$, range = 3-5,197), length of time in advising position, type(s) of students primarily advised, and location of advising position. The abbreviated measure of resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003) included six items on a scale from 1 = not at all true to

5 = true nearly all the time.

Data Analyses

For the MDD and GAD analysis, first, we used the “lavaan” package in R (Rosseel, 2012) for a confirmatory factor analysis of burnout and resilience items. The factorial model had an acceptable fit (CFI = 0.940, TLI = 0.925, RMSEA = 0.059, SRMR = 0.050; Kline, 2015). Next, we used two binary logistic regressions examining academic advisors’ odds of experiencing clinically significant symptoms for GAD or MDD. The results suggest the models fit well (MDD: $\chi^2 = 4.530$, $p = 0.806$; GAD: $\chi^2 = 13.397$, $p = 0.083$) (Hosmer et al., 2013).

For the burnout analysis, we also used the “lavaan” package in R (Rosseel, 2012) for confirmatory factor analysis on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and organizational factors. The factorial model had an acceptable fit (CFI = 0.930, TLI = 0.914, RMSEA = 0.054, SRMR = 0.052; Kline, 2015).

Next, we used three separate hierarchical linear regressions to assess the independent contributions of variables to the overall variance for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. We also examined advisors’ clinically significant symptoms of MDD and GAD using binary logistic regression models.

Results

Burnout

In the first regression model predicting advisors’ emotional exhaustion, genderqueer, nonbinary, or transgender advisors had significantly higher rates of emotional exhaustion. Conversely, men, advisors working less than five years, those working with honors programs, and older advisors had significantly lower rates of emotional exhaustion. Advisors with a higher caseload of advisees had significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

For the second regression model, none of the demographic variables from the first block were significantly associated with depersonalization. Advisors with a higher caseload of advisees had significantly higher levels of depersonalization.

In the third regression model, we found none of the demographic variables from the first block to be significantly associated with personal accomplishment. Advisors with a higher caseload of advisees had significantly higher levels of personal accomplishment.

Major Depressive Disorder & Generalized Anxiety Disorder

The results suggested that 16.9% of academic advisors had clinically significant symptoms for MDD, and 29.6% had clinically significant symptoms for GAD. The model for academic advisors’ clinically significant MDD symptoms suggested that Black or African American advisors, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization had significantly ($p < .05$) increased odds of experiencing clinically significant symptoms of MDD. Advisors’ personal accomplishment and resilience were significantly ($p < .05$) associated with decreased odds of experiencing clinically significant MDD symptoms.

The model for academic advisors’ clinically significant GAD symptoms suggested that genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender, and advisors with a gender identity that was not included in the survey had significantly ($p < 0.5$) higher odds of experiencing clinically significant GAD symptoms. Other variables with significantly higher odds of experiencing GAD symptoms included White academic advisors ($p < 0.5$), age ($p < .05$), emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization ($p < .05$). Finally, advisors’ personal accomplishment, being heterosexual, and resilience were significantly ($p < 0.5$) associated with decreased odds of experiencing clinically significant GAD symptoms.

Discussion

The results of the burnout study suggest that the one variable consistently associated with advisors’ burnout was academic advisors’ caseload of advisees, which was significantly and positively associated

with higher levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. While personal accomplishment may serve as a buffer against burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), more efforts are needed to stem the high burnout rates experienced by academic advisors.

The results from the mental health module of the study suggest that academic advisors have rates of clinically significant MDD and GAD symptoms that are higher than national averages (8.4% for MDD and 2.7% for GAD; National Institute of Mental Health, 2023a, 2023b). We also observed that burnout and resilience are strongly and consistently associated with academic advisors' clinically significant GAD and MDD symptoms. Advisors with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of depersonalization had increased odds of experiencing clinically substantial MDD and GAD symptoms. In contrast, higher levels of personal accomplishment and resilience decreased the odds of experiencing clinically significant MDD and GAD symptoms congruent with prior research (Koutsimani et al., 2019).

Recommendations

With the understanding that some employee groups may be more likely to experience burnout, MDD, or GAD, we recommend advising administrators and campus leaders share information about available counseling or employee assistance programs with all advisors. Advising administrators should receive training to help recognize the signs of trauma and can use trauma-informed approaches in their work with academic advisors (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Finally, we recommend cultivating mentoring relationships to bolster resilience (Kao et al., 2014).

Conclusion

The results of our study suggest that academic advisors may be experiencing potentially high rates of clinically significant MDD, GAD, and burnout. As such, academic advisors may need help to support students effectively. We encourage advising administrators to be mindful of academic advisors' mental health, use trauma-based approaches in their work with advisors, and take proactive steps to change workplace conditions to reduce advisors' burnout and boost their resilience. Advising administrators should reduce advisors' caseload and workload, increase advisors' compensation packages and agency, expand reward/recognition programs, increase opportunities for advisors to engage in advising communities, and prioritize academic advisors' well-being while honoring their values to support students.

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Unveiling the Story Behind Numbers: Using Institutional Data to Reform Program Support for Online Graduate Students

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Abstract: A comparative longitudinal data analysis between two online non-thesis master's programs--natural resource management and environmental science--in a college of natural resources to determine the relationship between student characteristics and disenrollment risks. Risks varied between the two programs, with significance found to increase the risk of disenrollment due to cumulative GPA, gender, time between degrees, and the number of terms not enrolled.

Keywords: attrition, graduate online, environmental science, master of natural resource

This study evaluated longitudinal data from students enrolled in online master's non-thesis natural resource management and environmental science programs to develop a predictive model of disenrollment risk. The Cox proportional hazards model was used to analyze time as a factor of attrition behavior and identify student characteristics as predictors of attrition. Historically, attrition rates are routinely higher for both online and non-traditional students than their on-campus traditional student counterparts (Boston, et al., 2011; 2012; Coleman, 2019). As such, awareness of risk factors associated with student populations are essential to ensure appropriate support systems are in place to promote optimal student success.

The purpose of this research study was to determine if student characteristics, educational preparation, or institutional enrollment patterns can be used to predict student disenrollment for natural resource management and environmental sciences non-thesis master's programs with online options. The research questions for this study included: 1) does risk of disenrollment vary between the natural resource management and environmental science online graduate programs? 2) are there statistically significant relationships between student characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, age, previous GPA, undergraduate degree field, time between degrees) and disenrollment risk by program? 3) do institutional behaviors (cumulative GPA, number of terms not enrolled) have a statistically significant relationship with disenrollment risk by program? In this paper we discuss supporting literature, research methodology for design, data collection, and analysis followed by results, discussion, and future research recommendations.

Literature Review

In many institutions, online graduate student populations are growing and constitute a large portion of graduate student populations, which has had a significant impact on institutional financial models (Cheslock & Jacuette, 2022). Online programs can be designed to accommodate part-time enrollment and asynchronous participation of learners who are unable to attend traditional campus programs or prefer the flexibility of an online platform. The structure of non-thesis graduate-level education can be appealing to working professionals with complex responsibilities or who live in remote locations. Despite differences between thesis and non-thesis programs, there are no standardized metrics for collecting data specific to master's non-thesis programs (Haydarov et al., 2013). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2012, 2020) showed postbaccalaureate online enrollments increased 10% between 2012 and 2020. One contributing factor to increased graduate enrollments is likely the expanded availability of online, non-thesis, course-based master's programs. However, the United States Department of Education does not delineate between non-thesis and thesis master's students. Ergo it is currently impossible to determine the level of enrollment increase or attrition of non-thesis students at the national level (National

Center for Educational Statistics, 2020). Analysis for attrition specific to non-thesis master's students must be conducted at the university or college level.

Rovai (2003) synthesized traditional models of student attrition and persistence developed for on-campus students into a composite persistence model for online non-traditional learners. Students come to distance learning and online graduate programs with different characteristics, skills, and challenges than students enrolled in traditional on-campus undergraduate and graduate programs (Rovai, 2003). The concept of student characteristics (age, ethnicity, gender, intellectual development, academic performance, academic preparation) and internal institutional factors were developed by Tinto for traditional on-campus undergraduate students (1975, 1982, 1997) and further developed for non-traditional on-campus students (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner added elements to the internal institutional factors (e.g., study habits, advising, program fit, etc.) and external factors (finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, life crises, etc.) that inform students' persistence decisions. Bean and Metzner removed social integration as an influence factor of persistence on the argument that non-traditional students have social networks outside the institution that influence persistence. In contrast, Workman and Stenard (1996) argued that social integration with peers and faculty for online non-traditional students was an influential factor on persistence, and Rovai agreed. Additional elements of the composite persistence model include student skills needed for success in an online educational environment such as computing and information literacy, time management (Rowantree, 1995).

The current literature pertaining to attrition and persistence in online graduate programs has focused on master's and doctoral programs in education and human social sciences (Coleman, 2019; Park & Choi, 2009; Park & Robinson, 2022), psychology (Kraiger et al., 2022), or nursing programs (Hayes Lane et al., 2022). Yet, there is a lack of literature specific to online programs in natural resource management or environmental sciences. To increase the understanding of this growing student population in natural resource management and environmental science (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; 2022) this study focused on identifying student characteristics associated with attrition risk as a basis for evaluation of student support systems.

Rovai argued that increased "assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement" is the "cornerstone of institutional effectiveness" (2009, p. 194). Other researchers have argued that measurement practices developed for undergraduate programs and traditional on-campus students are inappropriate for online graduate programs due to the increased complexity of mature adult learners who are frequently make up the bulk of online postbaccalaureate enrollments (Haydarov et al., 2013). Responsible evaluation of online graduate programs requires objective practices that accurately identify factors of attrition risk specific to non-traditional adult learners. Given limited understanding about students in non-thesis master's programs in the natural resource management and environmental sciences, this study inquired if online non-thesis master's students in natural resource management or environmental science are influenced by the same factors of attrition as students in other online student populations.

Methodology

After receiving IRB approval, longitudinal data from 2017 – 2023 was obtained from institutional research at a rural public university in the Pacific Northwest. The study sample included data from 620 students who enrolled in graduate programs with online options at a public institution. The data set included measures of students' previous education, demographics, semester by semester enrollment patterns, and institutional academic achievement. Comparisons were made

between two non-thesis master's programs designed for online students: the Master of Natural Resources (MNR) program and the Environmental Science Master of Science (ENVS) program. Each 30-credit program was designed for working professionals to obtain a master's degree.

Participants

Within the ENVS program ($n = 233$) the age range was 20-71, with a mean age of 32 (S.D. = 8.5), 60% of the students were female. The age range for the MNR program ($n = 387$) was 20 - 77, with a mean age of 32 (S.D. = 8.4), 45% of the students were female. Both programs were predominantly white (ENVS 77% and MNR 85%). In the sample 242 students had graduated (ENVS = 125, MNR = 187) and 66 were considered disenrolled (ENVS = 15, MNR = 51), and 51% were eligible to continue taking courses (ENVS = 93 and MNR = 149).

Measures

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of disenrollment was defined as students who were ineligible to take classes (Haydarov et al., 2013) and who did not graduate with a degree. There were three states a student could occupy: disenrolled, active, or graduated. The dependent variable was coded dichotomously as a 1 if the student had disenrolled from the program, or 0 if the student was eligible to register or had graduated from the program.

Independent Variables

Time was defined as length of time until the student experienced a target event (Coleman, 2019; Singer & Willette, 2003) and was measured in months. The beginning of time was the first day of the semester each student enrolled in the program. The end of time was measured as the end of spring 2023 semester. Individual demographic variables included gender, race/ethnicity, age, and military/veteran status (Rovai, 2009). Gender was measured as a binary. Race/Ethnicity was measured with dummy coding. Age was calculated at the time of first enrollment.

Education related experiences included if previous bachelor's was related to the natural resources, incoming GPA, and time between last degree (Rovai, 2009). Variables used to examine institutional education included stop-outs (terms with zero registration), credits per term, withdrawal, term GPA, cumulative GPA, disenrollment term, and graduation status. Graduation was measured at the institution level; students either graduated from ENVS or MNR or not at all.

Data Analyses

All data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Kaplan Meier (KM) is the simplest and most common method for comparing two populations over time, however KM cannot handle multiple covariates (Singer & Willett, 2003). Univariate KM models were used to look at the relationship between the outcome variable disenrollment and each predictor variable individually to determine significance of each predictor variable. The Cox proportional hazards model was used to create a predictive model of survival analysis to determine if students had graduated or disenrolled in relation to multiple predictor variables (2003). The hazard function was used to assess the risk of a disenrollment event and the survivor function was used to predict if students would persist to graduation.

Results

Kaplan Meier

A series of univariate models with KM examined the relationship between the outcome variable, disenrollment, with each individual predictor variable. The statistically significant education preparation predictor variables for ENVs included undergraduate GPA [$\chi^2(3) = 7.894, p = .048$] and days between most recent degree for both programs (ENVs [$\chi^2(119) = 168.64, p = .002$]; MNR [$\chi^2(160) = 451.13, p < .001$]). The statistically significant student characteristic variables were race for ENVs [$\chi^2(1) = 5.103, p = .024$] and gender for the MNR, with males at a greater risk for disenrollment [$\chi^2(1) = 5.123, p = .024$]. Institutional behavior variables that were statistically significant included cumulative GPA for both programs (ENVs [$\chi^2(56) = 82.03, p = .013$]; MNR [$\chi^2(79) = 220.67, p < .001$]). The number of stop-out terms was only significant for the MNR [$\chi^2(8) = 18.94, p = .015$]. Neither age, nor undergraduate degree in the natural resources variables were significant for either program. There were no cases of disenrollment for military or financial aid need in the MNR, or military for ENVs. Due to zero cases of disenrollment, (zero risk for disenrollment), the military and financial aid variables were removed from the full model.

Cox Model

The risk predictors of disenrollment were different between the two programs. The full Cox regression model for each program was specified with all predictor variables: age of first enrollment, stop-out terms, cumulative GPA, gender, race dummy variable, time between most recent degree, natural resource undergraduate degree, and undergraduate GPA. Only the MNR full model showed significant improvement over the constant-only model [$\chi^2(6, n = 387) = 28.549, p < .001$] indicating significance for stop-out terms ($p = .002$), cumulative GPA ($p < .001$), and time between most recent degree ($p = .021$). Holding with the KM, race alone was a significant predictor for ENVs disenrollment [$\chi^2(1, n = 233) = 4.282, p < .039$]. However, the significance of race was lost in the full Cox model with all predictors for ENVs.

Discussion

Research questions for this study included: 1) does risk of disenrollment vary between the natural resource management and environmental science online graduate programs? 2) are there statistically significant relationships between student characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, age, previous GPA, undergraduate degree field, time between degrees) and disenrollment risk by program? 3) do institutional behaviors (cumulative GPA, number of terms not enrolled) have a statistically significant relationship with disenrollment risk by program?

The purpose of this research study was to extend research using student characteristics, academic preparation, and institutional behaviors to predict disenrollment in students enrolled in natural resources or environmental sciences non-thesis master's programs with online options. Study results suggest that disenrollment risk does vary between the ENVs and MNR programs. KM results indicate ENVs students with a race other than white may experience significant increase of risk of disenrollment (Li et al., 2022), while males were at a higher risk for disenrollment in the MNR. As such, support needed for each program to promote student persistence should be tailored to mitigate the specific risks.

Age did not influence disenrollment risk as found by Boston et al. (2011; 2012) and Park and Choi (2009). These results run contrary to other research where age was found to increase disenrollment risk (Coleman, 2019) or decrease disenrollment risk (Greene et al., 2015; Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015). Other student characteristics were not found to be statistically significant in

relation to disenrollment risk despite previous research finding connections with financial need (Martinez-Carrascal et al., 2023), or military status (Boston et al., 2011; 2012).

Students without an undergraduate degree in natural resource fields or low undergraduate GPAs were not significant risk factors for disenrollment. Likewise, students from other disciplines pursuing either a natural resource management or environmental science non-thesis master's should not be construed as lack of academic preparation commonly associated with increase in disenrollment risk (Li et al., 2022; Martinez-Carrascal et al., 2023). Additionally, as time between the most recent degree and start of a master's program increases, so does the risk of disenrollment. However, other factors that may contribute to academic preparation such as work experience are not considered in this study.

Recommendations

The influence of transfer credits was not included in this study despite previous research findings indicating high influence on persistence (Boston et al., 2011; Boston et al., 2012). We recommend that institutions prioritize a practice of formalizing transfer credits upon admittance into programs rather than waiting to formalize with graduation applications. Additionally, gender is limited to male or female and does not reflect experience or potential disenrollment hazards to members of the LGBTQ+ community. We recommend that institutions implement changes to allow for more expression of gender identities. Additional recommendations for future research include expanding information on student soft skills such as literacy in discussion, reading, and writing (Rowantree, 1996). Furthermore, we recommend investigating the relationship between academic preparedness and work experience as work experience often bolsters soft skills. Finally, enrollment patterns and graduate course preparedness should be evaluated to determine behavioral changes pre and post onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Spiritual Formation in Later Life

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to share early results from an ongoing literature review intended to (a) explore the intersection of spiritual formation, aging, and lifelong learning, (b) situate this intersection within profound learning theory, and (c) develop a rich understanding and conceptual model which characterizes the qualities and processes of spiritual formation in later life. We argue that spiritual formation is a subset of profound learning which occurs over the life course. Additionally, we make the case that spiritual formation benefits those later and even at the end of life and should, therefore, be considered a promising arena for research and practice in our field.

Keywords: spiritual formation, aging, profound learning

This literature review is the first part of an empirical study that will explore the qualities, processes, and practices related to spiritual formation in later life and continue the conceptual and theoretical development of Profound Learning Theory. This study was intended to be a systematic review of literature, undertaken in two phases.

Literature Review

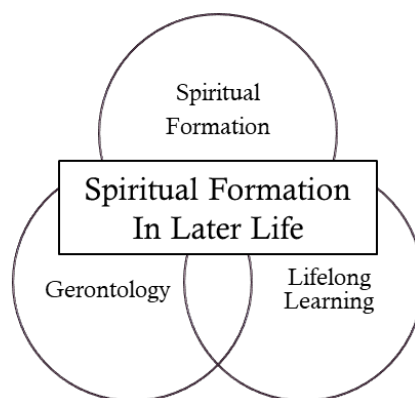
First, we planned to explore peer-reviewed journals likely to have spiritual formation within their scope. After developing a deep understanding of the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research related to spiritual formation, we would then, secondly, focus on later life literature found in the first phase and extend our database research to journals specifically focused on aging. Third, we would review the literature in our field, adult and lifelong learning, related to spirituality and spiritual formation. After summarizing and synthesizing this information, we intended to discover a gap in the literature that empirical work would fill.

Rabbit Hole Methodology

That research plan unraveled almost immediately. The literature on spirituality and aging is vast and extends far beyond our familiar field. We had much to discover and learn. The search snowballed as we explored the tables of contents in related journals, downloaded articles, and reviewed reference lists. Related references were tracked down and read, and their references were tracked down, downloaded, read, and so on. Keywords were added to our original search terms. The pertinent journals expanded as we discovered where scholars were publishing related work. Our initial attempts to document our searches went by the wayside as we followed interesting ideas. Some vocabulary was different - life course instead of lifelong, for example, and deep-thought leaders in these fields were new. Loosening the constraints of our original systematic literature review was freeing and enriching. One of our team members called this the “rabbit hole methodology,” wherein exploring new ideas and discovering interesting and related topics was easy, exciting, and provocative. As a team, we recognize that this divergent phase, for

Figure 1

At The Crossroads of Spiritual Formation, Gerontology, and Lifelong Learning



all its value, will require a more rigorous, systematic approach to move to convergent thinking.

Adult Education Has a Long History Related to Spirituality and Religion

The relationship of religion and spirituality has been a part of the field of adult education (AE) from the beginning. Fenwick and English (2004) laid out the influence of spirituality in the work of trailblazing AE leaders Myles Horton, Eduard Lindeman, and Paulo Freire, going back as far as Basil Yeaxlee and the Antigonish Movement. They suggest that “certain themes of spirituality would appear to offer a natural alignment with concerns of adult education” (p. 58). Fenwick and English (2004) indicated that “spirituality is gaining prominence as an integral part of AE practice and adult development theory” (p. 49), and Tisdell (2023) pointed out that “discussions of spirituality were relatively absent in the field of adult and higher education until the new millennium...” (p. 40) when spirituality began to be referenced by scholars. Still, as Tisdell pointed out in an earlier piece (2017), “the literature is exceedingly thin’ (p.2) in our field when it comes to “discussing the Big Questions of life . . . and relatively limited in exploring the intersection of spirituality and transformative learning” (p. 2). Carr-Chellman et al., in the 2020 *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, recently summarized the state of our field in a chapter entitled Adult Education for Human Flourishing: A Religious and Spiritual Framework, further making the case that “The individual experience might be extracted from the historical and institutional context for purposes of discussion or study, but like all situated learning, religious and spiritual experiences are inextricably tied together” (p. 300).

Spirituality as a Travelling Concept

Spirituality, Peng-Keller (2019) said, has had many “genealogies” (p. 87) with complex roots. Sheldrake (2013) wrote that Christian spirituality began with the early church and, over the centuries, has included monastic spirituality, spirituality in the city, spirituality in the Ages of Reformation and Reason, and its evolution through the era of modernity to postmodernity. Atchley wrote that “...each of the major faith groups—Christian, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism—is rooted in the profound, direct, authentic mystical experiences of its founder(s)” (p. 4), and Sheldrake (2013) writes that spirituality “is actually the core of all the different religions. It focuses on a virtuous life, religious experience, and the process of spiritual transformation” (p. 209). Atchley (2009) noted the contemporary popularity of spirituality as

well, as in 2007, Amazon.com listed more than 130,000 book titles related to spirituality, but he pointed out few authors try to define spirituality explicitly. Peng-Keller called the term spirituality a “travelling (sic) concept” (p. 95) and stated that “[m]ore than many other concepts labelled (sic) in this way, it has changed colour and shape in its restless travelling (sic) between different discursive worlds” (p. 97).

Spirituality is not only of interest to religions *per se*. For example, Balboni et al. (2022) reported a comprehensive, systematic review of studies that looked at spirituality when undergoing severe medical illness, end-of-life, or palliative care, looking for the connections between spirituality and health outcomes. The study’s expert Delphi panel review developed eight statements based on solid evidence. Their top three implications for serious illness were:

(1) incorporate spiritual care into care for patients with serious illness; (2) incorporate spiritual care education into training of interdisciplinary teams caring for persons with serious illness; and (3) include specialty practitioners of spiritual care in care of patients with serious illness. (p. 184)

These findings place spirituality and spiritual care squarely in the realm of education and training and are compelling reasons spirituality and learning should be a potential focal point for theory, research, and practice in our field. The transformational, formational, and developmental processes – the learning processes – are of particular interest to lifelong learning scholars, education practitioners, and learners.

Spirituality

As the previous section suggests, a comprehensive discussion of what spirituality means is well beyond the scope of this article. Atchley, in his book *Spirituality and Aging* (2009), provided helpful grounding,

...spirituality in its purest form is an inner, subjective experience. Pure, nonverbal experience of being is the spiritual field within which occur the mindfulness and present-moment awareness of Buddhists, the Christ-consciousness of Christians, the witness-consciousness of Hindus, and awe so prized by Jews, and the ecstatic consciousness of Muslims. (p. 6)

Sheldrake (2013) said the way contemporary spirituality approaches life is integrated and holistic, seeking the sacred, meaning, life purpose, and “ultimate values” (p. 4). Finally, Tisdell (2023) articulated spirituality as “. . . a journey toward wholeness, enabling one to see the extraordinary in the ordinary business of life, and our interconnectedness both to the natural world and to something bigger than ourselves” (p. 37-38).

Spiritual Formation

For purposes of this paper, we adopted the definition of spiritual formation described by the Sharing Spiritual Heritage Report, “Spiritual formation is the deliberate attending to the process of growth, maturation, and learning on the spiritual journey” (Scheidt & Campbell, 2020, p. 10). In the sense of “deliberate attending to the process,” spiritual formation moves spirituality from an idea to a learning process and is thus a topic of interest in our field. This process can be considered from theoretical perspectives (these variables cause this to happen with these outcomes), a developmental/life course process (this is how spiritual formation occurs over a lifetime), and from a practical perspective (this is how one can intentionally learn or teach others how to become more profoundly spiritual in identity and lived experience). Spiritual formation,

like learning, continues over a lifetime and includes formal education, life experience, and developmental learning. “Spiritual aging,” Weber and Osborn wrote, “...is the opportunity to grow spiritually throughout the course of our lives that is part and parcel of our growing older...” (2015, p. 10) and, as Mattes (2005) indicated, “The aging process by its very nature fosters a deepening personal spiritual development by drawing a person through the spiritual tasks of discovering, pondering, integrating, surrendering, growing, and companioning” (p. 59). Spiritual formation does not end at any particular time of life or any stage. Only death stops formation. Porter et al. (2019) offered a “meta-theory of spiritual change” (p. 8). Their discussion of the distinctions and relationships between spiritual, characterological, and moral formation can be applied to lifelong learning and profound learning theory in particular. Spiritual formation,

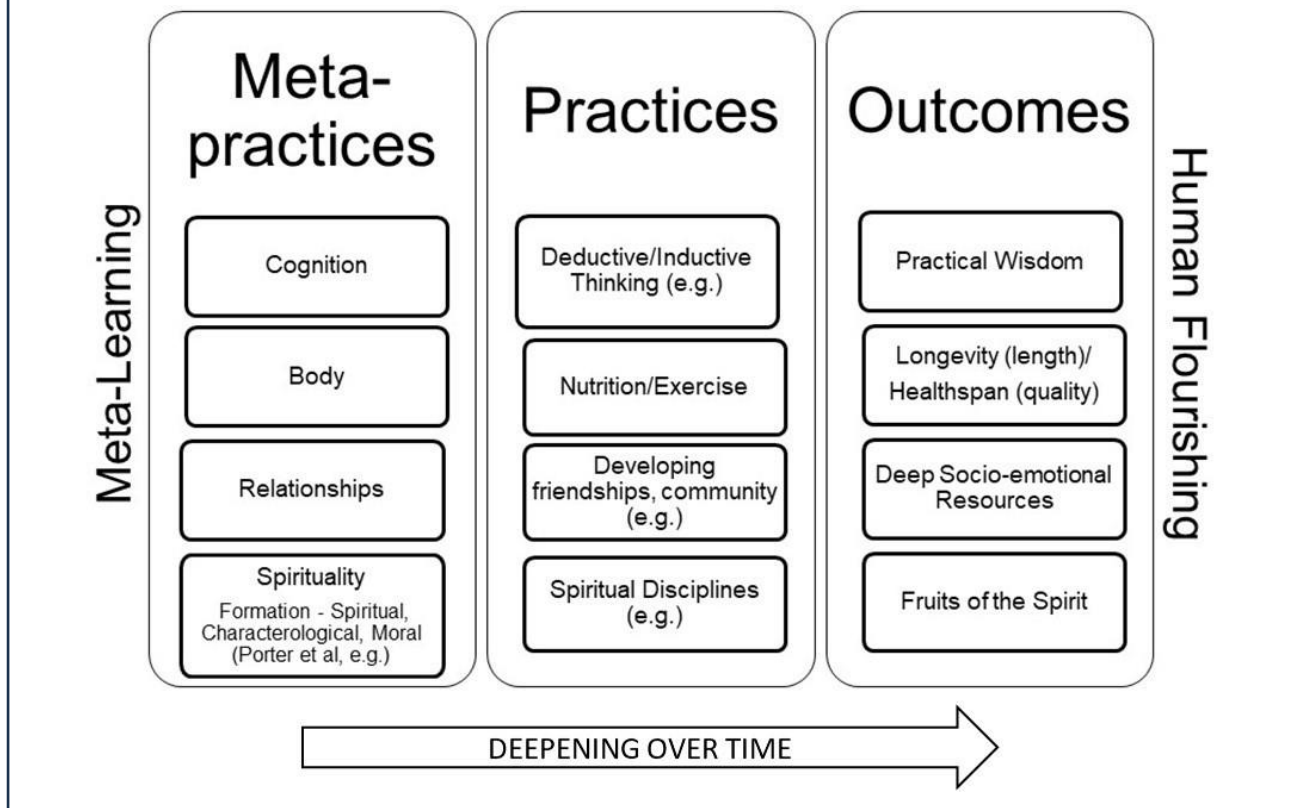
...has to do with features of an individual or group’s relatedness to God and/or what is held as sacred (e.g., God-image, the presence of God, love of God, word of God, filling of the Spirit, Scripture, etc...). ‘Characterological’ formation refers to the development of the habituated, virtuous dispositions (e.g., kindness, generosity, compassion, love, etc.). And ‘moral’ formation is meant to emphasize the outward behavioral manifestations of virtue in a person or group’s life (e.g., forgiveness, service, enemy love, etc.). Each of these interrelated terms qualifies as ‘formation,’ which is meant to pick up the notion of positive change/growth. (pp. 8-9)

Recently, formation has been proposed as a framework for lifelong learning (Kroth et al., 2022), suggesting that depth of learning is influenced by meta-learning and meta-practices that individuals intentionally pursue and develop; “profound learning revolves around rich, deep, durable, and meaningful experiences, and recognizes that people can learn and cultivate these kinds of experiences. Theoretically, these qualities can become a learning disposition, developed over time through practices” (Kroth et al., 2022, p. 27). The authors proposed four meta-practices that relate to the body, cognition, relationships, and spirituality, which lead to human flourishing. The intentional meta-practices, practices, and routines that lead to spiritual formation over a lifetime are the general topic of this paper; how that formation develops naturally or intentionally in later life is the specific interest here. Figure 2, Comprehensive Profound Learning Model expands the conceptual idea of meta-learning leading to human flourishing, as found in Kroth et al. (2022, p. 32), to include outcomes and incorporate Porter et al.’s (2019) discussion of the spiritual, characterological, and moral aspects of a “meta-theory of spiritual change” (p. 8).

Later Life Spiritual Formation

Moberg (1991) noted that “among all domains for change in human lives, the one that provides the most opportunity for growth in later years is the spiritual” (p. 9). While the physical, cognitive, and relational aspects of life inevitably decline in later life, spiritual growth is one area where lifelong learning can flourish. Later life can be considered in the context of transitions and rites of passage (Pevny, 2014) or developmental theory (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Mattes (2005) said, “The aging process by its very nature fosters a deepening personal spiritual development by

Figure 2
Comprehensive Profound Learning Model



drawing a person through the spiritual tasks of discovering, pondering, integrating, surrendering, growing, and companioning” (p. 59). He compares the aging process to a journey, which includes the hope of arriving at a final destination. Fowler (1981) proposed the eight stages of faith development, beginning with early childhood and continuing until late adulthood. Demarest (2008) conjoins journey and developmental thinking by looking at how spiritual progress can be considered as stages along the path, moving from “spiritual infancy (immaturity) to spiritual adulthood (maturity)” (p. 163). Spiritual formation can also be considered in light of qualities or experiences that are usually normal or unique to people in later life. Facing the increasing proximity of death and decline, for example, is expected for people in their 70’s, 80’s, and beyond. The need to remember *Memento mori*, the Latin phrase meaning “remember, you must die” (Ostberg, 2023), whispered in the ears of Roman conquerors and a key part of Stoic philosophical thinking, seldom needs reminding for older people. Facing death is a way of life for elders.

Conclusion

The study of spirituality, spiritual development, and spiritual formation is a topic highly related to the field of AE and lifelong learning and an arena that could provide paths to human flourishing for those in later life. Developing a deep understanding, theoretically and practically, is a topic ripe for plucking for AE scholars and practitioners.

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A Systematic Review of Trauma-Informed Certificate Programs

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Abstract: Heightened awareness of the impacts of trauma and early life adversities has created a greater interest in the broader applications of trauma-informed practice. Trauma-informed practices in professional and educational organizations are increasingly seen as a critical aspect of equitable learning, creating a need for quality educational certificate programs. In this paper, we present findings from a systematic review of six graduate trauma-informed certificate programs that offered curricula designed for broad audiences. We illustrate how their curricula align and represent a comprehensive and holistic curriculum.

Keywords: Trauma-Informed, Graduate Education, Systematic Review

Trauma-informed practices in professional and educational organizations are progressively seen as a critical aspect of equitable learning, creating a need for quality educational certificate programs. Navigating through the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic calls for trauma-informed graduate and professional development that utilizes a holistic approach. For this paper, we adopted the definition of holistic to denote “relating to or concerned with complete systems rather than with individual parts” (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). By holistic, we mean programs using a human-centered approach that addresses the needs of people throughout all aspects of their lives: personal, education, work, and beyond. From our standpoint, such a focus addresses the needs and worth of all people to foster resilience and well-being and promotes inclusion, justice, and belonging.

We share the results of a systematic review focusing on graduate certificate programs emphasizing trauma-informed education. Our study examines the alignment of their curricula and assesses the extent to which these programs offer comprehensive and holistic approaches to trauma-informed practices. Our goal was to critically evaluate the curriculum content to identify programs that effectively address the needs of learners, leaders, and organizations in a holistic manner.

Background

Trauma awareness has significantly increased over the last 25 years, beginning with the seminal study conducted by Feletti et al. (1998) about Adverse Childhood Experiences. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 50%-90% of people had experienced trauma in the United States (Brion, 2020; Donisch et al., 2016; Gray & Litz, 2005). Trauma and early life adversity increase a person’s susceptibility to adverse life outcomes and account for the second highest predictor of academic failure (Stevens, 2012; West et al., 2014). The increased awareness of the impacts of trauma and early life adversity has created a greater interest in the broader applications of trauma-informed practice. As the demands for professional development in trauma-informed practice increase, so do professional development and training opportunities.

Trauma-informed instruction is increasingly considered the key to creating equitable classrooms focusing on learner well-being (Marquart & Cresswell Báez, 2021). Evidence and research-based education and training programs are crucial for empowering professionals to

confidently implement, teach, and lead in trauma-informed ways (Alisic, 2012; Ko et al., 2008). Earning a graduate certificate is a cost and time-effective way for professionals and practitioners to gain expertise in a specialized knowledge area (Murray et al., 2011). However, the literature illustrates inconsistent approaches to professional development and education regarding trauma-informed practice (Donisch et al., 2016). Investigation into trauma-informed professional development and education is necessary to understand the commonalities and inconsistencies in these programmatic offerings. A systematic review and analysis of certificate programs in this emerging field supports programmatic improvement and innovation and can provide a blueprint for new program development. Reviewing these programs is essential to the long-term success of trauma-informed adult education.

Methodology

We applied an analytic, systematic review framework to this project. While such an approach is typically utilized to conduct literature reviews, we believe it is well-suited to analyze trauma-informed certificate programs. According to Russell et al. (2009), a “systematic review is a protocol-driven comprehensive review and synthesis of data focusing on a topic or related key questions” (p. 5). A systematic review utilizes a highly methodical approach that limits and reduces researcher bias (Crowther et al., 2010). Our protocol followed these steps: (a) research question; (b) preliminary search/preidentified source; (c) inclusion/exclusion criteria; (d) preliminary screening; (e) refine inclusion criteria; (f) screen course descriptions; (g) code and compare course offerings; and (h) synthesize findings.

Data Collection and Screening

The project team identified 29 trauma-informed professional and graduate certificates for the initial review. The Resilient Educator (n.d.) website served as a resource for locating institutions offering certificate programs, where we identified 21 programs in higher education institutions offering graduate and professional trauma-informed certificate programs. Three institutions offered more than one program, resulting in 24 certificate programs for review. We found four additional programs via Google and one final program via word of mouth that did not appear on the Resilient Educator (n.d.) website or web search.

Initial inclusion criteria for the systematic review were (a) professional, graduate, and post-graduate certification programs; (b) programs offering teacher professional development credits; (c) comprehensive, multi-course, or multi-module programs; (d) online (synchronous and asynchronous), on-campus, or mixed delivery methods; and (e) generalist or multidisciplinary programs. During preliminary screening, we discovered that graduate and professional certificate programs significantly differed. Traditionally, certifications are obtained upon completing training, leading to acquiring a professional credential. Conversely, a graduate certificate is an academic certificate recorded on a transcript provided by an accredited higher education institution (Research Graduate Certificate Programs (n.d.)). In our preliminary screening of the curricula, we found that the program structure, content, and delivery of professional certifications differed significantly from the graduate certificates, which prompted us to limit the scope of the review. Therefore, we removed professional certificates and programs centered on professional development credits for educators from the inclusion criteria. Refining the inclusion criteria resulted in the removal of eight professional and continuing education programs. Additionally, three undergraduate certificates and two master’s degree programs were removed for not meeting

inclusion criteria, resulting in 16 certificate programs in the review. Because we were looking for generalist programs, we screened out discipline-specific curricula and removed programs in psychology, education and special education, clinical practice, and social work. From the eight graduate certificate programs remaining, we removed two due to institutional mergers and closures. Of the six programs that met the final inclusion criteria, five were listed on the Resilient Educator (n.d.) website, and one was the result of a Google search.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the graduate certificate program content areas using open-coding, or an initial coding approach that “breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in *Saldaña*, 2016, p 115). Initial codes were derived from course titles and descriptions when available. The course offerings resulted in thirty unique codes that we classified into eight corresponding content areas. Content areas include (a) mental health and therapy; (b) education; (c) JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion); (d) social work; (f) organizations and leadership; (g) foundational; (h) resilience and well-being; and (i) other. Codes that only appeared once were classified as “other.” At first, we included core courses and electives in the analysis; then, we removed the electives because our goal was to better understand the *unifying* or *core elements* of certificate programs. After removing elective course codes, 20 codes remained in six content areas. Figure 1 details the final list of codes and corresponding content areas.

Figure 1
Codes & Corresponding Content Areas

Corresponding Content Areas							
		Mental Health & Therapy	JEDI	Organizations & Leadership	Foundational	Resilience & Well-being	Other
Codes	{	TI-CBT Mental Health	Race & Trauma Trauma & Social Justice Cultural Perspectives & Learning Disability	TI Leadership TI Organizations Professionalism	Neuro/Brain Intro Traumatology/ TI-Care TIC – Best Practice Trauma & Stress	Self-Care Resilience Grief & Loss	TI Special Topics Trauma Research TI Schools Ethics SW/Social Welfare

Findings

Through this systematic review of trauma-informed graduate certificates, we aimed to understand common elements of curricula in programs that appeal to a broad audience. A preliminary review of these programs revealed three central understandings best captured by the following U2 lyrics: 1) “But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for” (U2, 1987a), 2) “We’re one, but we’re not the same” (U2, 1991), and 3) “You give it all, but I want more” (U2, 1987b).

“But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for” (U2, 1987a). Although program descriptions

list applicable professions for their curriculum, the content focuses primarily on clinical practice, social work, or working with children and adolescents. Outside of using the word “community” to discuss the broader application of trauma-informed practice, we did not explicitly see a more comprehensive discussion of how to engage in trauma-informed practice across the lifespan.

“We’re one, but we’re not the same” (U2, 1991). Programs included in the corresponding content area appeared to have the broadest applications, making it challenging to determine the universal components of a generalist program. Two-thirds of programs offered courses in what was deemed a foundational curriculum, and only one of the six programs had representation in five of the six corresponding content areas. Finally, the only area representing all six programs was “other,” signaling that the only consistency across curriculums is that the courses cannot easily be categorized. Interestingly, the program with representation in the most corresponding content areas was not listed on the Resilient Educator (n.d.) website.

“You give it all, but I want more” (U2, 1987b). While analyzing the course offerings, we assigned 20 codes corresponding to core curricula covered in the six certificate programs. The 20 codes resembled general course topics and did not relate directly to a single course title. Yet, with the wide variety of courses offered, we did not locate a universal content area among the core courses. Moreover, more diverse course offerings were found in the electives but not included in this review. Courses offered as electives were better aligned with our definition of holistic courses, indicating that holistic aspects of the curricula often live in optional spaces.

Discussion

This paper presented findings from a systematic review of six trauma-informed graduate certificate programs. This project aimed to find ways, if any, the program curricula aligned and how the course offerings contribute to a holistic certificate program. Instead of finding a broadly applicable holistic program, we generally found course offerings were either 1) not truly generalist or 2) varied so considerably from program to program that it was difficult to identify a core curriculum. When developing new disciplines, instructors are often at the forefront of defining the curricula; therefore, standardization of knowledge, particularly in an emerging area, is steeped in the practices of a limited number of institutions (Zadravec & Kočar, 2023). Programmatic inconsistencies led us to a new problem: the lack of a governing or regulatory body that guides generalist trauma-informed educational programs in higher education. This new problem leads us to ask: (a) who determines the standards, and what should those standards be; (b) how to determine expertise in the discipline of trauma-informed practice; and (c) who should be the regulating body? While the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration was vital in coordinating the Interagency Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care, it is unclear how that work informed curricula in trauma-informed higher education programs (SAMHSA, n.d.).

The next research steps include examining program descriptions, goals, and learning outcomes using instructional design frameworks such as ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) (Branson et al., 1975), Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), Gagné’s Nine Events of Instruction (Gagné, 1985), and Merrill’s Principles (Merrill, 1994). Completing an in-depth analysis of learning goals and outcomes supports our aim of creating a blueprint for programmatic development in the emerging discipline of trauma-informed practice.

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No Pity Invites: Information Ecological Approach to Including Disabled Adult Learners in Higher Education

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Abstract: As adult learners with disabilities increasingly participate in higher education, adult educators must adapt their instructional practices and learning environments to meet all learners' needs. Information Ecology Theory studies how social structures such as higher education institutions serve students with disabilities. The theory explores how people, practices, values, and technologies within an institution can strengthen teaching and learning. This paper aims to illustrate how Information Ecology Theory can assist adult educators in developing accessible and inclusive courses for adult learners. Specifically, we will discuss how adult educators, disability support services, instructional designers, and information technologists can partner to serve all adult learners.

Keywords: accessible instruction, adult educators, disabled adult learners, higher education, information ecology

Kevin: "No pity invites" was inspired by my experience as a profoundly deaf adult learner. My fellow researcher and I took a qualitative research course during our doctoral studies. In a particular class session, during breakaway group discussions, my peers spoke inaudibly and did not overtly invite me to join the discussion, resulting in me feeling excluded and upset. I excused myself from the group and left the classroom, prompting another friend to come to the hallway to offer support. It took several minutes for me to calm down, but I mustered the courage to reenter the classroom. Upon returning to the group discussion, my peers spoke more clearly and even asked for my ideas. Although they included me in the discussion, I felt their behavior was out of sympathy or pity for my disability.

Adam: My colleague's experience inspired me to share my lack of knowledge regarding disability and how to include learners with disabilities. This was the beginning of our journey as we began engaging in conversations to learn from one another and develop a research agenda to better understand adult learners with disabilities and enhance inclusion in higher education.

This paper aims to extend scholarship on including adult learners with disabilities in higher education by proposing a teaching and learning framework grounded in Information Ecology Theory (Nardi & O'Day, 1999). First, the paper offers background information on including disabled adult learners in higher education. Second, the authors introduce Information Ecology Theory and discuss its practical application in serving adult learners with disabilities. Lastly, the implications of an information ecology approach are shared.

Background

Higher education is becoming more diverse with an influx of adult learners, and a growing subset of this population is adult learners with disabilities (Carr-Chellman et al., 2022; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2022). The authors conceptualize disability as socially constructed. The idea is that disabled adult learners are limited not by their diagnoses but by attitudes toward disabilities and traditionally inaccessible teaching and learning environments (Dolmage, 2017). Adult learners with disabilities vary in terms of their expectations and motives for learning; preferred modalities for receiving information; strategies used to process, retain, and apply information; and desired means of demonstrating mastery of learning (Gerber, 2012; Gregg, 2012; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018). Given the variability of adult learners with disabilities, adult educators must acquire knowledge of these students' accessibility needs and design inclusive teaching and learning environments (Hock, 2012; McGinty, 2021; Nycyk, 2018).

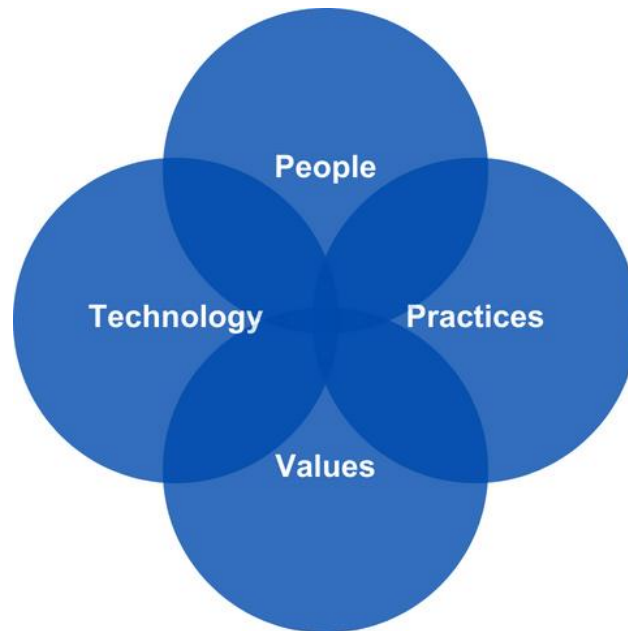
Various teaching and learning frameworks have been developed to assist adult educators with the inclusion of adult learners with disabilities. For example, Housel (2020) recommends that adult educators practice Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, which involves eliciting the lived experiences of adult learners (e.g., ethnicity, gender, abilities). Adult educators may adopt the Communities of Inquiry framework by regularly communicating with disabled adult learners in distance learning environments and providing ample opportunities for peer collaboration (Sheward et al., 2022). Implementing a Profoundabilities model (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2022) or Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (Meyer et al., 2014) accentuates disabled adult learners' capabilities through flexible instructional design. Although adult educators have used different frameworks to design inclusive teaching and learning environments, these approaches overlook the institutional partnerships and accessibility policies affecting the inclusion of adult learners with disabilities.

Information Ecology Theory

Building on the frameworks above, the authors propose using Information Ecology Theory for designing inclusive teaching and learning environments. Information Ecology Theory (IET) examines the dynamics of social structures within institutions and provides a framework to facilitate the inclusion of disabled learners (Perrault, 2011). As depicted in Figure 1, IET comprises four components: people (e.g., adult educators, disability services coordinators, instructional designers), practices, values, and technologies in higher education institutions that affect the inclusion of adult learners with disabilities. Each component is discussed in the following section.

Figure 1

Information Ecology Theory



Applying Information Ecology Theory for Including Adult Learners with Disabilities

Designing inclusive teaching and learning environments requires the collaboration of **people**: this approach can include adult educators, disability services coordinators, and instructional designers. Adult educators are pivotal in implementing accessible and inclusive practices in learning environments (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2022). Through awareness, collaboration, and training, adult educators can engage in the following **practices**:

- Receive accessibility training from disability services coordinators (Dolmage, 2017).
- Solicit feedback from disabled adult learners through anonymous surveys and community forums, and continually reflect on and refine instruction based on the insights shared (Mallary, 2023).
- Facilitate collaborative environments for learners to engage with information and contribute to knowledge creation (Sheward et al., 2022).
- Consult instructional designers to ensure that materials are accessible to adult learners who use assistive technologies (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018).
- Exchange disability-related resources with colleagues to build an accessibility- and inclusion-driven culture (Black & Moore, 2019).

Along with the components of people and practices, **technologies** are essential to including adult learners with disabilities. Teaching and learning practices are enabled by various technologies, such as learning management systems that facilitate content delivery and peer collaboration

(Sheward et al., 2022). Embedded in the provision and use of technologies is the final component, **values** (Potnis & Mallary, 2023). For example, adult educators can partner with instructional designers to provide materials in accessible formats (e.g., captioning, electronic books, large-print materials) so learners can equitably receive information (Mallary, 2023). Adult educators may foster classroom belonging by encouraging students to use technologies to share and apply information.

Implications of the Proposed Model

Adopting an information ecological approach in higher education involves cultivating an accessibility mindset and strengthening partnerships among adult educators, disability services coordinators, instructional designers, and administrators. Central to this approach is adult educators' commitment to reflecting on and using feedback from learners to design more inclusive teaching and learning environments. To support accessible course design, adult educators may employ a variety of resources, including the Center for Applied Special Technologies (2018) UDL Guidelines, Microsoft's (2023) Accessibility Resources, and the World Wide Web Consortium's (2023) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. By engaging in these practices and recognizing the essential role of technology within the IET framework, adult educators may design more inclusive teaching and learning environments to address disabled adult learners' needs comprehensively. Designing accessible courses for adult learners with disabilities provides equitable experiences for all adult learners in higher education.

Conclusion

Creating an inclusive space for disabled adult learners in higher education requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the intricacies of teaching and learning environments. Information Ecology Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics within higher education institutions. By fostering collaborative partnerships among adult educators, disability services coordinators, instructional designers, and administrators, higher education institutions can foster a culture where disabled learners can excel. This paper highlights the importance of embracing an information ecological approach to build a more equitable and inclusive higher education landscape.

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Transitioning a Postgraduate Medical Education Program to a Virtual Platform: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

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Abstract: Learners and faculty across three cohorts in a Master's of Medical Education program engaged in a structured reflection process to understand how they experienced the divergent educational approaches that resulted from COVID-19. These experiences included in-person, emergency remote (hybrid), and virtual. We utilized the Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning (DEAL) model to guide the learners' reflection processes and our analysis. We summarize the reflections, review emerging themes, and highlight key lessons learned.

Keywords: virtual education, hybrid learning, learner engagement, guided reflection, COVID-19

In 2013, Cleveland State University and Cleveland Clinic began offering the Master of Education in Health Professions Education (MEHPE) program to meet the professional development needs of clinical and non-clinical educators. The initial educational experience was entirely in person until March 2020, when national COVID-19 lockdowns forced the program to swiftly transition to virtual delivery. Since then, the program has been offered in a fully virtual setting. The purpose of this structured reflection was to glean insight from the guided personal reflections of learners and faculty from three MEPHE cohorts: in-person, emergency remote (hybrid), and virtual. Our aim was to understand the differences in individual experiences across each modality. The questions that guided our structured reflection were the following:

- How did participants from different cohorts experience the MEHPE program and how did these experiences differ based on their learning milieu?
- What did the participants identify as the affordances and constraints of their learning environment?

MEPHE Program and Transition to Emergency Remote Learning

The Cleveland State University/Cleveland Clinic Master of Education in Health Professions Education (MEHPE) program provides the knowledge and skills medical and health professionals need to build expertise in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programming. This two-year cohort-based program is taught by Cleveland Clinic and Cleveland State University faculty and includes courses in (a) learning theory and instruction, (b) learner assessment and program evaluation, and (c) scholarship and technology in health professions education, as well as two capstone courses.

Until 2020, the program was held weekly in person at Cleveland Clinic's main campus in downtown Cleveland. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced academic institutions across the globe, including Cleveland Clinic, to transition to remote operations (Sahu et al., 2022). Like other educational programs, the MEPHE program's objective in 2020 was to ensure learners had temporary and reliable access to virtual instruction and instructional materials. This sudden transition, labeled emergency remote teaching (ERT), resulted in a rapid transition to fully virtual learning without regard to evidence of effectiveness (Hodges et al., 2020). Varied experiences were reported. For example, Cowan et al. (2022) used surveys to assess the experience of their medical students during this transition and noted that learners preferred the convenience and technological affordances of virtual formats while they simultaneously desired in-person interactions and face-to-face learning. Specifically, for more dynamic learning such as case-based learning sessions and anatomy labs, a strong preference for in-person learning was reported ("by at least a ratio of 2:1") (Cowan et al. 2022, p. 384).

After reflecting on some of the affordances, such as sustainability and inclusivity, the MEHPE program directors and stakeholders opted to continue virtually. From 2021, the program has been offered in a purely virtual format that includes asynchronous and synchronous online learning experiences. While appreciating major trends from the quantitative data from Cowen et al, we aimed to obtain more insight into the variations and reasoning behind the experiences of both learners and educators by employing a qualitative approach using structured guided reflection. Given the importance of ongoing evaluation and the fact that graduates and professors involved in this program were particularly invested in reflecting on their education experience, we opted to employ a structured guided reflection to gain further insight into how the varied learning environments impacted the understood experiences among each of the unique cohorts.

Methods

A structured reflection process was employed to compare experiences among three unique cohorts, in-person, hybrid, and virtual, using a guided reflection tool called Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning (DEAL) (Ash & Clayton, 2009). This model focuses on facilitating and collecting reflections of learning experiences to maximize student learning and assist instructors in the design of effective instruction (Ash & Clayton, 2009).

The authors developed a one-page survey based on the DEAL model of guided reflection. It included 13 open-ended questions aimed at understanding the impact of the varied learning environments on educators and learners. As this was a preliminary study requiring guided reflections, we contacted current students and alumni who had expressed interest in understanding the impact of ERT and as well as an interest in furthering their program evaluation skills. We sent email invitations to 10 students and 7 agreed to participate. This guided reflection sample included learners (n=7; from in-person cohort (n=1), ERT, or hybrid cohort (n=3), and all-virtual cohort (n=3)), and professors (n=2). The questionnaires were returned via email to the primary author. Responses were de-identified for confidentiality and compiled into a single document, organized by question. Each of the authors independently coded the collected responses. As a group, all authors then reviewed the individual coding, identified common words and phrases, and mapped these to overarching themes. We then identified whether these themes were present in one, some, or all three of the cohort responses. Selected quotations from the data are presented to support the major themes that emerged.

Results

All the learners identified perceived benefits and drawbacks of their experiences, regardless of their learning milieu. For example, participants who experienced ERT including the in-person learning environment reported a negative perception of the classroom activities and social cohesion in the virtual setting. In both the in-person and hybrid cohorts, professors used instructional approaches that required physical learner interactions. In all cohorts, groups were provided opportunities in class to engage in small-group projects which they found productive for learning, however with certain caveats. For instance, in a series of classes related to teaching methods students were asked to design and implement a learning session based on various approaches (e.g., debate or fishbowl), the learners perceived more flexibility for the in-person approaches, whereas the virtual cohort had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with online tools to increase engagement.

The shift to remote learning negated the in-person engagement and changed how learners interacted. Respondents identified challenges when attending classes in the virtual environment. These challenges are reflected in the following quotes. A hybrid learner explained, “I can imagine that the teaching methods portion would be more effective in person because some teaching methods require a physicality that can’t be duplicated virtually.” A learner from the virtual cohort identified how this modality impacted their interactions, “virtual takes away from non-verbal learning and instructional methods and is more dependent on that verbal/screen interaction.” Despite the challenges, respondents were able to identify the benefits of a virtual learning environment that made participation and connection on group projects easier. One hybrid learner stated, “I think that virtual learning gives people who are more introverted a greater chance to participate via chat versus speaking up.” Virtual learners appreciated the ability to be at home with their family or to participate remotely if they were traveling for work or vacation. Finally, the virtual environment allowed for the inclusion of individuals who lived outside of the program’s home state.

While several themes were identified in the analysis of the 9 participant reflections, the most notable included (a) participants across the cohorts had varying experiences impacted by the virtual environment, and (b) participants perceived impact to social learning and engagement as a result of the move to a virtual learning environment.

Theme 1: ERT impacted the perceptions of the virtual learning environment

The first theme highlighted the differential experiences across the learning environments. The respondents who had experienced ERT (i.e. those in the hybrid cohort), were most notable. This cohort experienced the uncertainty associated with the global COVID-19 lockdown of all institutions. Learners experienced isolation from the cohort and distance from the learning experience after the program moved to a virtual setting. They also experienced uncertainty about how the program would proceed and how a permanent move to a virtual learning environment would impact their experiences. One hybrid learner expressed it this way: “I feel the move from in-person learning to virtual learning was a bit of a letdown. I felt alone sitting at my desk at home even though we were all together on screen.” This cohort, over the course of seven months of in-person classes, had developed strong relationships with one another. One participant indicated the move to “a virtual format had a huge impact. When COVID hit and we were sent home...I missed seeing my colleagues in person after that.”

This theme was also reflected in one professor's response,

I feel it took me longer to establish connections and rapport with students in the virtual setting compared to in-person. Also, the nature of these relationships was different. While I did form meaningful connections with some students in the fully virtual setting, it appears that I could not do so with as many as I had with previous cohorts with face-to-face interactions.

Learners in the fully virtual learning environment had positive perceptions of their learning experiences and identified ways they were able to connect more easily. This cohort of learners did not have the in-person experience and were not aware of how the program was implemented prior to COVID-19. Despite not seeing everyone in person, the group was able to find alternative ways to engage and develop connections. Unsurprisingly, the participant from the fully face-to-face cohort reported no disruption in their learning experiences as digital platforms were used to augment rather than replace the learning experience.

Theme 2: Relationship development and socialization was impacted by the virtual environment

The second theme focused on the impact of the learning environment on the socialization process. Faculty in the program, who had taught in all three settings, identified ways in which the opportunity for socialization and the development of communities of practice were changed. Faculty perceived the virtual milieu as not providing the opportunity for interactions before and after class as well as during the breaks. One faculty reflected, “informal socialization does not occur anymore. I’d argue that there is no informal socialization during class time, at least that I’m aware of. This impacts relationship building, both for students and faculty.”

Participants from the hybrid experience expressed they felt like they were missing the interactions with peers. Participants from the fully virtual experience acknowledged they did not have the same level of socialization as the prior cohorts but found ways to connect with their peers. For example, one participant explained,

I think the social aspect of MEHPE is an important one since the cohort does most of the courses together throughout the two years. Despite being in a virtual environment, between informal social discussions during class (or in our offline group WhatsApp) we got to know each other quite well as individuals. This gave us a better appreciation of everyone’s perspective. Furthermore, by working and discussing in small groups, as well as responding to each other’s Blackboard posts allowed this learning to continue to build even between sessions and gave us a first-hand experience of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal learning.

There is an element of socialization in all group-oriented learning environments. Some of the socialization is informal and occurs when learners engage with each other before and after classes. This is also true with learner engagement with faculty. The fully virtual cohort did not have prior experiences to compare, however, they found new ways to connect with their peers.

Discussion

In this structured reflection, we found that participants generally had positive learning experiences irrespective of their learning modality. Despite challenges, all participants were able to identify some benefits of a virtual environment including flexibility and convenience. Specifically, there was ease in scheduling and reduced commuting. Learners maintained a better work/life balance. They reported feeling more present for their families even when participating in synchronous classes while at home. Additionally, some even noted that the features found in the virtual platform (e.g., chat feature) enabled easier communication. From a programmatic standpoint, the program expanded student recruitment to a larger geographical area and the subsequent cohort included learners from other states. A recent systemic review analyzing remote learning developments in postgraduate medical education in response to the pandemic identified a similar theme, noting that “a number of authors commented on how remote learning provided flexibility, removing the barriers of time and the hassle of travel associated with in-person participation” (Khamees et al., 2022, p. 479).

There were several identified constraints of the virtual learning environment and more specifically, the overall experience of ERT. Learners from the hybrid cohort reported they felt more personally disconnected. These feelings may have been exacerbated by the stress of working in healthcare during a global pandemic. The move to fully virtual programs significantly shifts the way learners and faculty interact and decreases interpersonal engagement and opportunities for socialization. The lack of non-verbal cues negatively affects learners when presenting virtually. The relationships may not extend beyond the classroom environment and subsequent collaborations may be diminished resulting in learners’ feeling socially isolated (Byram et al., 2022). These challenges can be mitigated using group chats for connecting socially (e.g., WhatsApp), in-person social events, and interactive learning techniques. In addition, a cohort model allows for longer-term peer engagement and may have a protective effect on socialization.

With the growing prevalence of virtual and/or hybrid learning opportunities, it is necessary for instructors to better understand the ways in which these types of environments are successful and where they can be improved. There is no consensus from a pedagogical or andragogical standpoint regarding whether one approach is superior to the others (Nguyen, 2015). The efficacy of virtual learning may be dependent on the content or the context (Pei & Wu, 2019). Still, other research showed evidence that a hybrid approach is best (Du et al., 2022; Khamees et al., 2023). For professions that rely heavily on social learning for professionalization or require in-person practice, a hybrid environment is optimal.

Programs designed to be exclusively virtual requires both learners and facilitators to have the technological fluency to effectively navigate learning platforms and coursework. As the reflections illustrate, learners who have never experienced in-person activities will embrace the virtual experience if it is facilitated effectively. It is important to acknowledge that learners and educators might feel isolated (Khamees et al., 2023) and this might be mitigated by requiring learners to come to campus once or twice a semester. Educators and learners who adopt an orientation of adaptation and openness to new experiences may have better outcomes. Our structured reflection provides insight into the question of the efficacy of hybrid and virtual modalities in health professions education. However, there are limitations. We draw upon learners from one HPE program, and the participants who elected to participate may have been motivated by either their enthusiasm or dissatisfaction with virtual and hybrid learning.

Conclusion

As institutions move beyond the pandemic, many programs, including ours, have elected to remain in a virtual environment. Despite a lack of consensus in the research, the MEHPE program course designers decided the benefits outweighed the challenges to continue with a fully virtual program design. Careful planning and attention to student experience are essential to any program's continued success. Broadly speaking, educators who can adapt their content successfully to an online platform will set their students and programs up for success. Additionally, health professions educators are in a position to help the field better understand the efficacy of virtual learning. This is an important area for further exploration as currently there is not a consensus regarding how such approaches impact learner outcomes. While the virtual learning environment poses some constraints, educators who adopt a reflective practice that allows for insight into their current practice can guide their future practice enact Dewey's philosophy: "We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience" (Lagueux, 2021, p. 3).

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Warming Up Higher Education's Chilly Climate: A Model for Supporting Adult Female Learners

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Abstract: Adult female learners are constantly juggling roles amidst a chilly climate plagued by gendered stereotypes and their implications. Bronfenbrenner's interactive development model, encompassing the four components of process, person, context, and time, provides a baseline to understand how interactions between family, school, and work impact adult female learners. Beyond this, the model and recent adaptations fall short. Neither Bronfenbrenner's original ecological human development model nor Renn and Arnold's (2003) reconceptualization of it applied to college students adequately depicts the experience of adult female learners. This paper used poststructural feminist perspectives alongside personal lived experience to offer a new adaptation of the ecological development model.

Keywords: adult female learner, ecological development model, poststructural feminist pedagogy, chilly climate, nontraditional student success

Adult female learners (AFL) are a unique higher education population with specific needs and demands that influence their development. These learners have diverse learning needs (Kerka, 2002), compounded by experiences of a chilly climate (Renn & Reason, 2013) as well as socially constructed gender expectations of role multiplicity (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Despite grounding in the psychological field, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) Ecological Development Model and its adaptation into an interactive model by Renn and Arnold (2003) for college students does not account for the unique developmental experiences of AFLs.

This paper uses the words *female* and *women* interchangeably; in every instance, we are referring to any learner that is female identifying. In recognizing that societal norms of femininity apply across intersections of women's identities (Gatens, 1998), we can build a foundation of understanding of the adult female experience to build upon with future investigation of additional intersections.

This paper discusses the climate of higher education faced by adult female learners and what impacts existing scholarship has found this climate to have. Because neither Bronfenbrenner's original model of ecological human development nor Renn and Arnold's (2003) reconceptualization of it applied to college students adequately depicts the experience of adult female learners, this paper will also apply poststructural feminist perspectives, alongside personal lived experience, to offer a new adaptation of the ecological development model for adult female learners.

Background

Institutions today promote heteronormative masculinity in a system of genderism that mandates every student have a single gender identity (man or woman) and behave in a way that socially

suits the subsequent gender expectations of that identity (Renn & Reason, 2013). That said, Lester and Harris (2013) note that female learners' "pressure to maintain femininity causes identity conflicts" and "pressures to perform and maintain socio-historical gender norms" (p. 152) can negatively impact their experiences in higher education. This chilly climate encompasses experiences and perceptions of things like sexual harassment, sexist jokes, and lowered academic expectations for women, which can impact female learners' cognitive gains in their first two years of college (Renn & Reason, 2013). Socio-historical gender norms and pressures to maintain femininity feed into the chilly climate, causing identity conflicts and pressures to perform that directly impact the experiences of female students.

Women in higher education classrooms experience greater levels of stress, negative perceptions of support in their classroom environments, and perceived pressures to perform gender as defined by the expectations of their instructors when compared to the experiences of male students (Lester & Harris, 2015). Richardson and King (1998) note that explicitly, adult female and other minoritized learners "are subjected to an interactive web of entrenched values from long-standing elitist systems" (p. 67-68). In a study of working-class female students, Reay (2003) found that women students, especially those with children, were constantly balancing school, work/financial, volunteer, and family commitments. Instead of the lifestyle experienced by younger students, these adult women expressed a sacrificed social life and a scarcity of time for self-care (Reay, 2003).

According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), the changes adults go through as they age are relative in load (both external and internal expectations) and power (resources, supports, skills, social value). AFLs experience different margins of power depending on their marital status, work flexibility, or access to childcare in addition to their postsecondary undertaking (McClusky, 1970). The implications of increased roles, demands, and time conflicts on nontraditional female students are often associated with higher stress, anxiety, and depression (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Coupled with experiencing a chilly climate for learning, adult female learners have the deck stacked against them in higher education.

Approach

In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner published *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* to understand human development related to their environments and interactions with others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1977) describes the ecological environment as "conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 514). They are separated into four systems: the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem. The nesting of these systems within one another is depicted as the macrosystem being the outer layer and the microsystem being the innermost layer. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) explain the interaction of these layers by saying,

"The four levels of systems—micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems—are inextricable, interactive, and complexly related. What happens in one affects the others as well as the developing individual. They provide stressors and buffers, creating opportunities for increasingly complex activities in which the student can participate, while supporting and rewarding sustained commitment to those increasingly complex endeavors" (p.165).

Research has shown that gender stereotypes and engendered societal expectations impact learner outcomes (Lester & Harris, 2013). These factors, alongside what we know about the

multiplicity of roles (Reay, 2003) experienced, meaning that the decisions an adult female student makes within every/any level of context are consciously or subconsciously impacted by these social norms and expectations. Chilly climate, in addition to micro and macro aggressions, can be enforcers of the macrosystem but play out at every level and change over time as a woman ages. Because of this, the Ecological Development Model and recent adaptations fall short for AFLs. It is necessary to redesign the depiction of the macrosystem to permeate all layers of context through to the central *individual*.

To refine Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Development Model for adult female learners, Tisdell's (1996, 1998, 2000) poststructural feminist pedagogy is applied. Poststructural feminist pedagogies help account for differences among learners, the role of power in the construction of knowledge itself, and how the positionalities of students and faculty members impact the environment (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). The combined pedagogy helps us consider an individual capacity for agency, macrosystem factors that affect learning, and the power relations that influence how official and personal knowledge is constructed and shared (Tisdell, 1996).

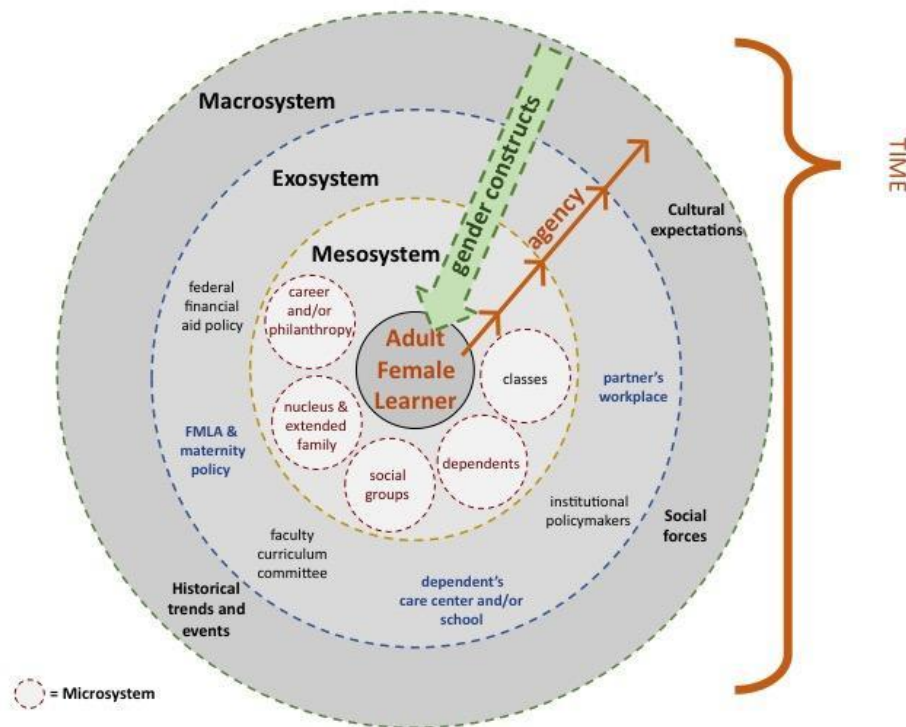
Major Themes

The core critiques of Renn and Arnold's (2003) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Development Model for college students while introducing the Poststructural Feminist Ecological Development Model for Adult Female Learners (depicted in Figure 1) meant to address the critiques through model adaptations. "The person, and not the environment, is the center of later iterations of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development" (Dalla, 2006, p. 207). The loss of the individual adult female learner at the center of recent models is the first key critique. In Figure 1, dotted lines represent the fluidity and connection between the four systems. A solid circle is intentionally employed to recognize the unique AFL at the model's center.

Renn and Reason (2013) state the importance of noting "that process interactions are two-way: the person and the environment influence one another" (p. 124), and yet their adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's model for college students does nothing to signify this interaction. Specifically related to adults in higher education, some scholars advocate that adult education is responsive to context while also affecting that same context, a similar two-way interaction (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Poststructural feminist pedagogy emphasizes the role of individual agency in the learning process, which captures this interactive process. The inclusion of a layered agency arrow is a recognition of the AFL's agency and capacity for more than a passive and isolated human at the center of her environment in the new iteration of the model. It has an arrow on each context system to represent how an AFL might choose to take action at any level system to change its ecological environment.

Figure 1

Poststructural Feminist Ecological Development Model for Adult Female Learners



The second key critique of Renn and Aronld's (2003) adaptation for college students is the exclusion of a chronosystem—a way to acknowledge the time in society that adult female students are attending postsecondary education and the time in their lives as adult women that they are becoming students while managing other roles. Including the originally intended chronosystem is necessary in this model's new iteration because social norms and times of life events (including attending postsecondary education) are incredibly impactful on AFLs.

Because Ecological Systems Theory, and thus Renn and Arnold's adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's model, is grounded in a psychological rather than an anthropological perspective, the focus of development is on the individual and not the cultures in which they are embedded (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Based on what we know about AFLs, the engendered sociocultural expectations of women are pervasive throughout all layers of the ecological system. Scholars have shown the adverse impacts of social, cultural, and historical gender norms on female students and we know that female students are considering these norms when choosing disciplines (Lester & Harris, 2015). The cross-system pervasiveness of gender norms and constructs is the next critique of Renn and Arnold's (2003) adaptation of ecological development for college students. Poststructural feminist pedagogies recognize the "psychological and social and political factors that affect learning" (Tisdell, 1996, p. 311).

The addition of a gender constructs arrow helps account for the impactful effect of gender constructs in every system of the AFL's ecological development context. This arrow is dotted to indicate its interaction and impact on any/all layers. It goes from the macrosystem—where gender constructs live on through socially reinforced expectations—to the individual AFL.

Discussion

Adult learners in higher education are here to stay (Ross-Gordon, 2011), and the prevalence of women enrolling in postsecondary programs is higher than the rate for men (NCES, 2007). Adult learners are often overlooked in higher education institutions (Newbaker, 2012) despite being a prominent and diverse student population (Richardson & King, 1998). The Poststructural Feminist Ecological Development Model for Adult Female Learners is a starting point for understanding the development of the female-adult learner intersection. It is also important to note that this only provides a starting point to recognize the inherently varied development experiences for adult female learners compared to other learners. It is *not* meant to imply that all adult female learners are the same, as different intersecting identities can significantly impact an adult woman's environmental contexts, role expectations, and developmental experiences.

Faculty and administrators could use this model to think beyond the traditional, masculine modes of postsecondary teaching and learning toward poststructural feminist pedagogies for a more supportive learning environment for adult female learners. This model also provides a structure for higher education institutional leaders and student affairs professionals to frame conversations around policy, services, and the unique needs of adult female students. The Poststructural Feminist Ecological Development Model for Adult Female Learners is not a one-stop solution to the challenges that adult female learners face in higher education. Still, it reframes the development conversation in a way that is critically conscious of the presence and individuality of this population.

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Guiding Adult Learners with Disabilities through Challenging Transitions in Higher Education

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Abstract: Adults with disabilities face challenges during transition points in their lives, including while transitioning into and out of post-secondary education. Both learners and educators share responsibility for understanding strategies that enhance educational inclusion. Creating an inclusive learning environment provides the means for overcoming transition barriers. This paper will identify practical strategies to address disability complications at transition points. Suggested strategies that assist learners with disabilities include actionable items that learners and educators can implement. Learner strategies focus on self-disclosure, accommodation requests, and communication elements. Educator strategies focus on course design, communication, engagement, and support elements.

Keywords: disability, transition, inclusion strategies, neurodiversity, doctoral research

This exploration examines how the needs of neurodivergent adult learners transitioning into and out of post-secondary education can be supported by adult educators using inclusive teaching and learning practices. We discuss the specific transition needs of learners with disabilities, identify practical strategies for successful transitioning, recognize the need for inclusion of neurodivergent learners, and argue for future research on transition.

Neurodivergent adult learners can experience stigmatization, which “affects the ability to successfully transition from one phase of life where an individual may have found acceptance to another phase where inclusion is not guaranteed” (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021, p.2). They may need assistance and resources to move from secondary school to post-secondary education to the workplace. Social justice-based approaches to adult education reveal the necessity that adult educators recognize the needs of their neurodivergent learners, particularly as more of these students are enrolling in adult education courses and programs.

Life Transition Points

Transitioning from familiar settings, practiced roles, comfortable relationships, established daily practices, and accepted beliefs, may they be minor or significant, planned or unexpected, can be jarring and stressful, yet change can also provide opportunities (Pavlova et al., 2017; Praharso et al., 2017; Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021; Schlossberg, 2011). Moments of significant change “can be a source of personal growth and development. At the same time, life transitions can also be viewed as stressors” (Praharso et al., 2017, p. 265). Beginning post-secondary education and then leaving their studies to take their place in the workforce are two major points of transition where adult educators can assist neurodivergent learners in achieving success (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021). The role of adult educators is important as these transition points require greater independence, yet “independence is not about doing everything for yourself but about having control over how help

is provided” (Morris, 1998, p. 10).

Schlossberg’s (2011) Theory of Transition outlines four transition components: situation, self, support, and strategies. The situations relevant to these times may include moving from a childhood home to a college campus and then to independent living and work environments as neurodivergent learners take on more adult roles and decision-making that require focusing on the self and using inner resources to cope with change. A disability can hinder one’s development of coping skills if there was excessive support and low expectations in the past, or the ability to cope may be a strength because of the necessity to compensate for a disability throughout one’s early life (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021). Transitioning from stable, familiar environments and routines to new ones that are unknown, uncertain, and unpredictable “can present greater risks and a sense of insecurity and uncertainty” (Pavlova et al., 2017, p. 1); adult educators can provide support for neurodivergent learners through strategies that smooth the transition process (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2021).

Historical Views of Disability

Disability has been viewed from different perspectives over time, and an understanding of the various models of disability can inform teaching and learning practices that can best assist adult learners in effectively transitioning to and from higher education. The moral model views disability as an individual affliction resulting from failure or sin (Goodley, 2017). This lens offers a justification for inequitable treatment (Baynton, 2013). The medical model sees disability as a bodily defect that needs to be remedied to move the individual as close to the societal norm as possible. Knowledgeable professionals guide treatment as this view supports ableist beliefs that those with disabilities are inferior and less capable (Goodley, 2017). The application of the medical model has precluded learners with disabilities from participating in higher education, particularly through the limitations of restricted accommodations.

The social model supports a minority and civil rights framework. It makes “a conceptual distinction between ‘impairment’ as a functional limitation and ‘disability’ as a socially generated system of discrimination” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 50). The attention shifts away from the individual to society, creating inclusion barriers. It is a model that more closely aligns with the social justice tenets of adult education and demands adult learners with disabilities not face discrimination in higher education and the workplace based on their disabilities. Finally, the relational model considers both the impairment and the societal context as they interact. It builds a community of people who share the “burden to deal with difference in ways that allow members to share the rights and responsibilities” (Valente, 2016, p. 28) of learning and working together. Communication between disabled and non-disabled adults is paramount as they develop inclusive and mutually beneficial relationships.

A Critical Disability Theory Perspective

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to supporting and understanding neurodivergent students’ academic experiences and transition into college and the workplace. However, the approach to teaching and learning that adult educators adopt affects the students’ success. Examining the socially constructed nature of disability is crucial as a concentration on social norms that stigmatize neurodivergent students and a hyperfocus on impairments rather than strengths is detrimental to neurodivergent students (Hall, 2019). Viewing neurodivergent students through the lens of Critical Disability Theory (CDT) assists adult educators in understanding that the “social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is caused by the physical, institutional and

attitudinal (together, the ‘social’) environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of ‘normalcy’ (Hosking, 2008, p. 7) and avoids the discriminatory perspectives of ableism (Hall, 2019).

Neurodivergent students can experience attitudinal bias and a lack of or limited disability awareness on their campus and in their workplaces. The consequences of this ableism can be minimized to create and maintain inclusive settings through educational and professional development initiatives, restructuring the decision-making processes, and protecting against recognized stigmatization by maintaining a social approach to adult education. The CDT approach presents “disability as a cultural, historical, relative, social, and political phenomenon” (Hall, 2019, para. 1). It supports neurodivergent students by providing equal access to education, services, and inclusive transitions (Hall, 2019).

Transition to College

Transitioning to college for all students can be challenging; neurodivergent students can find this change especially anxiety-provoking. Neurodivergent students often need supplemental support like mentors, counseling services, social support groups, exam accommodations, and assistance in daily living (Anderson et al., 2017). Adjustment, defined as social, personal, emotional, and institutional acclimatization, can predict a successful transition (Lipka et al., 2020). Preparedness for the change in environment and increased independence can yield greater success and retention, leading to graduation. Identifying the skills necessary to navigate life on campus and training the student for knowledge in the areas targeted as deficient is important. Lipka et al. (2020) and Roux et al. (2015) suggested the number of neurodivergent students entering universities is notable, and the need to prepare these individuals to adjust is paramount. Neurodivergent students need support in the transition process, focusing on social engagement, life coaching, and accessing disability support services for accommodations. Sheward et al. (2022) identified the lack of accessibility that some college students experience when seeking out disability services. Little guidance is available for where to begin and what accommodations are available. The need for ongoing assistance is clear.

Lipka et al. (2020) discussed the ability to adjust to the new environment from a personal, social, and emotional perspective. Many neurodivergent students have the skills necessary to live independently; however, social skill deficits or personal emotional issues may inhibit the connection others seek when leaving home. Onyishi and Sefotho (2020) found that along with social, academic, and environmental supports, personal support systems are necessary; it is important to develop a natural support system on campus like that at the student’s home and school. White et al. (2018) claimed that parents of neurodivergent students reported struggles with social activities, self-advocacy, and managing personal needs without the guidance of parents or guardians. Self-advocacy is essential in having needs met and remaining safe. Students with strong self-advocacy skills are less likely to be taken advantage of in a novel location or situation. Grogan (2015) spoke of the need to educate professors and administrators on the needs of neurodivergent students. When an adult educator is prepared to provide the appropriate guidance, the student can request accommodations to enhance their educational experience. The educators can review their curriculum, processes, methods of communication, and connection to each student. Braxton et al. (2002) argued for Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure and the need to assimilate and integrate in formal and informal college settings. Formal was defined as the academic areas and extracurriculars, while informal referred to the faculty and staff interactions and peer relationships. Tinto referenced the persistence needed to become a part of

each area on a college campus.

The graduation rate for neurodivergent ASD students averages 35% (Anderson et al., 2017). The unstructured environment can create isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression and trigger suicidal behavior among neurodivergent students, along with an increased rate of dropping out before degree completion (Jackson et al., 2017). The lack of support from friends and family and the distraction of campus sounds, crowds, smells, and other sensory factors have direct consequences. Jackson et al. (2017) explained that despite reporting being pleased with their close friends and relationships on campus, neurodivergent students struggled to integrate with the broader campus environment and felt isolated. Neurodivergent students face challenges navigating the transition to collegiate life and require support across environments. By educating adult educators, programs can be implemented to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities and the broader student population.

Transition into the Workplace After College

The unemployment rate for neurodivergent adults, such as those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is 85% (Palumbo, 2021). Research has shown that neurodivergent adults want to pursue a post-secondary degree and desire to work after graduation. Their challenges and experiences require structure for the student to succeed, support services to enable their success, and additional education and strategies for school administration and professors in working with this adult student population. Neurodivergent students are often an invisible populace on campus. When diversity, equity, and inclusion are discussed during hiring, neurodivergent adults are typically forgotten. More neurodivergent adults are attending college, yet studies have discovered that Autism, for example, is often an “invisible” disability on campuses. Professors are not trained in how to work with these students, which has a direct impact on the student’s classroom experience (Zeedyk et al., 2019; Hatfield et al., 2017; Oslund, 2013).

A student’s collegiate experience directly correlates to their workplace preparedness. For example, the STEM field offers many solid benefits, including a high salary, high job satisfaction, and a strong economic employment outlook (Green, 2014). Neurodivergent individuals are underrepresented in this field. Neurodivergent adults have the lowest employment rates, fewer hours worked, and lower weekly wages compared to people with other disabilities (Wong et al., 2020). There is a need for post-secondary schools to provide services to support neurodivergent adults to better transition to the workplace (Wong et al., 2020). Hatfield (2017) stated that a lack of transition planning is a common barrier to successful employment for adults diagnosed with Autism; for example, it is characterized by difficulties in socializing communication, as well as restricted interest and repetitive behaviors. Difficulties coping with change can cause anxiety. Transition can be very difficult, and there is a need for strong preparation and communication to reduce these anxiety-driven situations (Hatfield, 2017). Wong (2020) believed that school-based transition supports the following: planning, adaptive behavior training, and the level of parent-teacher alliance, that correlates with students’ school positive performance and transition outcomes. Adult educators in college departments such as Career Services and Disability Research Offices can implement transition strategies such as summer employment opportunities with career training skill courses, campus employment opportunities, off-campus internships, practice job interviews, job shadowing options, and connections to hiring programs that welcome neurodivergent individuals to assist neurodivergent students with the transition to the workplace.

Conclusion

The overarching themes noted in the above studies related to transitioning to college included the need to prepare for the day-to-day rigor of a college campus, planning for homework and schedules, and the social aspect of college. The need to have more specific, intentional preparation in these areas was consistent. High school administrators and course designers could apply the feedback from students to address the areas of deficit in the current programs. When transitioning into the workplace, neurodivergent students need structured support in identifying meaningful career opportunities that match their skills, a place in the diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring discussion, specific transition planning similar to transition programs for students entering post-secondary education, adaptive behavior training specific to the workplace, and increased employment opportunities throughout their years in college. By recognizing the needs of neurodivergent students and designing programming to meet them, adult educators can increase the chances for success for neurodivergent students throughout college and at the start of their careers.

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Exploring the Needs of Generation Z Adult Learners in College and in the Workplace

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Abstract: This article presents the insights collected from an engaged interactive round table session, where participants came together to collaboratively brainstorm and deliberate upon best practices for effectively educating and mentoring Generation Z adult learners in both classroom and workplace settings. Drawing upon the extensive body of literature on Generation Z characteristics, the session served as a solid foundation for the discussion. At the heart of this roundtable was the central theme: the pivotal role of educators and mentors in guiding and supporting Generation Z individuals. By exploring strategies, challenges, and innovative approaches, this article offers a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted landscape of Generation Z education and mentoring, shedding light on key insights and actionable recommendations for educators and mentors.

Keywords: Generation Z, coaching, mentoring, workplace, classroom, adult learners

Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z, represents the cohort of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, and this generation falls after the millennial generation (Seemiller & Clayton, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Generation Z is characterized by its unique set of experiences and traits. Generation Z individuals are often considered the first true digital natives, having been immersed in technology from a very early age. This upbringing has shaped them into a highly tech-savvy and connected generation (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Shaikh et al., 2023) with a strong affinity for smartphones, social media, and online communication (Dong, 2021; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Shaikh et al., 2023; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Generation Z is known for its diversity and global perspectives, valuing inclusivity and social justice issues (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017; Weber & Keim, 2021). They tend to be pragmatic and entrepreneurial (Seemiller & Clayton, 2019; Smith & Cawthon, 2017; Stillman & Stillman, 2017), seeking innovative solutions to societal changes. While they share some commonalities with previous generations, their distinct experiences and worldviews make them a generation with their own unique identity and characteristics. The purpose of this paper is to help educators and employers understand Generation Z's significant characteristics as they navigate a rapidly evolving world influenced by values, ideas, beliefs, and preferences. The significant characteristics are pulled from the current literature.

Background

In the educational setting, Generation Z students present challenges and opportunities for educators. They are accustomed to instant learning and information (Smith & Cawthon, 2017). They also often prefer active (Becker, 2022) and experiential learning approaches (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017; Weber & Keim, 2021). Educators are discovering successful teaching methods, such as incorporating technology, gamification, and other

interactive concepts in their teaching strategies (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017). Generation Z is known for its social awareness and desire to make a positive impact on the world (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Shaikh et al., 2023). Educators can employ this concept by integrating real-world problem-solving and social justice topics into their curricula, such as case studies or inviting guest speakers into the classroom (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017). In contrast, Generation Z's attention span may be shorter due to consistent digital stimulation, so educators need to be mindful of the lesson construction and possibly keep lessons concise, engaging, and relevant (Kutlák, 2021; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017).

This generation is marked by its entrepreneurial spirit and remarkable understanding of technology (Iorgulescu, 2016; Smith & Cawthon, 2017). Many seek out tech-oriented job opportunities (Iorgulescu, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Their social and environmental mindset leads them to gravitate towards organizations aligned with their values, including those committed to social responsibility and sustainability (Iorgulescu, 2016; Seemiller & Clayton, 2019; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic helped foster their familiarity with remote work, making them likely proponents of flexible work arrangements (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Becker, 2022). Generation Z's preference for diverse and inclusive workspace, financial planning, and job hopping in search of better opportunities further pinpoints this dynamics generation's approach to employment (Barhate & Dieani, 2022; Becker, 2022; Iorgulescu, 2016; Seemiller & Clayton, 2019).

Generation Z is more likely to favor online shopping and is influenced by online reviews and social media advertisements, in addition to prioritizing sustainability and ethical consumption (Becker, 2022). Their decision-making rationalization typically correlates with their desire for authenticity and a sense of purpose (Kutlák, 2021; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Generation Z faces unique challenges encompassing mental health and addiction to digital technology (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Their dependence on technology, at times, results in shorter attention spans, necessitating a constant need for stimulation (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). They are incredibly capable navigating smartphones, social media, and the Internet, which significantly influences their communication styles, information consumption, and social interactions (Dong, 2021; Seemiller & Clayton, 2019). This generation is characterized by its comfort with instant digital connectivity.

Discussion

Recognizing Generation Z characteristics in the workplace and the classroom is critical for various reasons. First, Generation Z individuals possess distinct preferences, expectations, and communication styles shaped by their status as digital natives. They grew up in a world embedded with technology and are incredibly familiar with information consumption. By understanding these characteristics, educators and employers can tailor learning and work environments to better suit the needs of this generation, enhancing engagement and productivity. In the workplace, Generation Z brings a set of interesting characteristics and expectations that employers should understand and adapt to. Generation Z individuals are tech-savvy; they grew up with smartphones and consistent connectivity, making them highly adaptable to digital tools and remote work environments. In addition, they also value face-to-face interpersonal communication connectedness and collaboration, seeking a balance between technological and in-person interactions. Generation Z tends to be entrepreneurial and eager to take on challenges, making them significant in innovative and dynamic work environments. Employers who can provide opportunities for skilled development, feedback, and a sense of purpose are more likely to attract

and retain Generation Z capabilities.

Effective communication is a significant core of successful education and workplace relationships. Generation Z places importance on clear, concise, and instant communication. Acknowledging this significance allows educators and managers to adopt their communication strategies, ensuring that instructions, feedback, and information are conveyed effectively. This can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and emphasize a more efficient learning and workplace experience. Generation Z's recognition of the importance of interpersonal communication skills should not be underestimated. While this generation is tech-savvy, they value strong communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Educators and employers can emphasize the development of these soft skills to prepare Generation Z individuals for success in collaborative work environments, where effective communication and collaboration are key.

It is recommended that educators and employers need to be aware of Generation Z's high expectations regarding career development and growth. This generation aspires to meaningful career and personal growth. To meet these expectations, educators and managers must provide the necessary guidance, mentorship, and opportunities for Generation Z individuals to thrive and achieve their goals. As they become a significant part of the workforce and student population, understanding and recognizing their characteristics is beneficial and essential. Employment organizations and educational institutions that understand and adopt to Generation Z's traits will be better equipped to remain competitive and relevant in an evolving society.

The interactive roundtable discussion encompassed recommendations on various subjects. Currently, a majority of research concentrated on Generation Z is focused on individuals living and maturing within European countries, India, and the United States, where the definitions of Generation Z differ by several years. An avenue of exploration would involve examining whether generations of individuals worldwide resonate with the characteristics associated with the United States. Additionally, there is a need for more research on Generation Z and their engagement with educational preparation programs. This can encompass educational students aspiring to become P-12 teachers or other professionals, such as the health care field. Such research endeavors not only facilitate a deeper comprehension of this generational cohort for employment professionals but can also help employers and enhance onboarding development and program design. Lastly, research centered on additional developmental training in the workplace or a required course in education to assist Generation Z individuals with human communication approaches.

Conclusion

This proceeding provided a synthesis of the insights gathered during the interactive roundtable session dedicated to enhancing the education and mentoring of Generation Z individuals. By captivating a collective wisdom of diverse participants and leveraging the extensive body of literature on Generation Z characteristics, we have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by this unique generation. The central theme that emerged from the discussions—the pivotal role of educators and mentors—reminds us of the profound influence that guidance and support can have on the growth and development of Generation Z learners in both classroom and workplace environments. It is our hope that the insights and recommendations presented in this research will empower educators and mentors to navigate these perspectives effectively, ensuring the success and well-being of Generation Z individuals as they embark on their educational and professional journeys.

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History of Redlining and Impact on Formal Occupations of Adult Learning

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Abstract: This project aims to gain a new understanding of redlining and the nature of how human beings occupy their time. Redlining was/is government-sanctioned discriminatory race-based exclusionary tactics in real estate. Occupational science and adult learning tenets support the idea that how we occupy our time matters; Black Americans could not buy houses or participate in community activities of their choice. Our literature review leads us to postulate that historical redlining harms residents' ability to participate in formal occupations. Conceptualizing redlining through an occupational and educational lens is a novel approach and helps reveal the history of everyday living under redlining policies.

Keywords: redlining in Kentucky, occupational science, occupational therapy, history of redlining

Redlining is government-sanctioned housing discrimination by banks that steered Blacks away from White neighborhoods. The quality, cost, and location of housing had ramifications for the total well-being of Black citizens. Additionally, the authors contend that redlining negatively influenced Black citizens by preventing them from participating in occupations that would have resulted in successful interaction at the community level (Designing the WE, 2020; Silverman and Patterson, 2011). This project aims to add to the literature on redlining by contributing historical knowledge of racist redlining practices. It also helps to promote a greater understanding of adult learning and participation in formal occupations. We begin with a summary literature review from the disciplinary fields of history, social science, adult learning, and occupational therapy, followed by the authors' postulates of their findings for future in-depth study.

Literature Review

This literature review chronologically highlights primary and secondary sources by categories of housing access, policy, community occupations, and life in Kentucky neighborhoods. Historically, the federal government aimed to promote homeownership by backing mortgages with federal loan guarantees, and its implementation had a profoundly unequal effect by channeling the overwhelming majority of mortgage lending toward White borrowers, systematically cutting off access to credit for minority communities (Lipsitz, 1995).

Housing Access

Minority groups steered towards purchasing homes in declining neighborhoods experienced depreciating property values, higher-than-average mortgage default rates, victimization by predatory lenders, and difficulty in maintaining property (Silverman & Patterson, 2011). In support of Silverman and Patterson's (2011) findings, Hanlon (2011) found that racially restrictive covenants increased in the country from 1917 onward – resulting in racial zoning with legal resiliency until this was ruled unenforceable by the U. S. Supreme Court; “together with

mortgage redlining policies, restrictive covenants ensured that most new housing developments appearing on the urban fringe, unless built specifically for blacks, remained exclusively white” (p. 739). The Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) (n.d.) looked at state maps and impediments to fair housing access with overlays of poverty, income, health insurance coverage, race, transportation, and internet access. Of note is that they identified four housing access barriers for Black citizens: lack of complete kitchen/plumbing facilities, overcrowding in the home, and cost burden.

Federal and State Policy

Public policy to mitigate housing discrimination has remained underfunded, underdeveloped, and poorly implemented. With the Housing Act of 1949, a pattern of displacement of the urban poor emerged and continues today under the guise of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and subsequent amendments meant to prohibit discrimination “at any point in the sale or rental of housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin” (Silverman & Patterson, 2011, p. 3). By 1975, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) required financial institutions to report their lending patterns by race, income, and geographic location –followed by the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977, which allowed communities to challenge bank mergers (Silverman & Patterson, 2011). Minority groups living in separate communities from Whites did not benefit from property value increases as substantially as property owned by Whites.

Community Occupations

Wright (1992) found that the quality, cost, and housing location for minority groups negatively influenced their total well-being. Skinner et al. (2021) discovered that the internet and broadband access associated with redlining perpetuated a digital divide. Li & Yuan (2022) followed Skinner et al. (2021) with an analysis of city redlining maps, food environment census tracts, and modified retail food environment index (mRFEI) and discovered that redlined neighborhoods showed a higher likelihood for unhealthy retail food environments. Besser et al. (2022) also found that adults ages 65+ in redlined neighborhoods reported less neighborhood walking – a meaningful occupation (AOTA, 2020). Swope et al. (2022) concurred that racialized housing policies shaped place-based disparities in access to health resources. Finally, Kowalski et al. (2023) found a significant association between redlining, childhood obesity, and neighborhood walkability.

Kentucky Neighborhoods

Before 1910, Blacks were denied the right by real estate developers to purchase lots/houses in some neighborhoods even without said ordinances. State historians claim that throughout KY, Blacks lived physically close but separate from/to White neighborhoods, usually demarcated by railroad tracks or businesses, and there was a lack of schools, churches, and grocers in many Black towns in Lexington (Wright, 1992). Gathering places such as stores, organizational headquarters, and churches were needed for Black communities to emerge. Evidence during the late 1800s showed Black residents of two Lexington neighborhoods participated in recreational activities, schools, church functions, and later restaurants and theaters. Moreover, these social opportunities were meaningful occupations away from where they were employed, and racial discrimination still limited fair and equal access to community occupations (Klotter & Friend, 2018; Wright, 1992).

Methodology/Approach

The authors wrote memos, reflective notes, and summaries of multiple content sources related to redlining. For example, we utilized Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports for survey and economic data sets and the University of Kentucky KY Atlas and Gazetteer (n.d.) site – a repository website of Kentucky population statistics, geology, and geography. We sourced the book by George Wright (1992) on the history of Kentucky Blacks and Richard Rothstein’s book *The Color of Law* (Rothstein, 2017). We were also truly fortunate to have unlimited access to a traveling exhibit, *UnDesign the Redline* (Designing the WE, 2023), sponsored by the Lexington Public Libraries. The exhibit traced structural racism, including historical artifacts, from 1930 to the present. We reviewed secondary sources specific to occupation and adult learning concepts: journal articles, the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) (AOTA, 2020), and the seminal book on adult learning - *Learning in Adulthood* (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Finally, a graduate assistant developed a literature review table of 11 sources. Overall, we captured content from 31 primary and secondary sources analyzed for data per our Grand research question: *How did residents of historically redlined neighborhoods in Kentucky engage in meaningful occupations?* We also included our sub-questions: *How did these residents perceive a sense of health and well-being and the relationship between neighborhood redlining practices and residents’ educational activities?*

Findings and Discussion

This project began with the authors’ profound interest in the traveling exhibit *UnDesign the Redline* (Designing the WE, 2023). We gained further understanding through the literature on the state of Kentucky’s redlining practices and found scarce data on residents’ occupations, including education, in redlined neighborhoods. These results seem to be aligned with adult learning constructs, proposing that true learning in adulthood is knowing who participates in education activities and why (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). For this project, the literature shows us that Black residents in Kentucky could not participate fully in community occupations. Thinking of occupations this way is important because everyday activities people do as individuals, in families, and with communities occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life. We offer three postulates (fundamental elements) from our project that frame our thinking about KY redlining and adult occupations for future in-depth research:

- Postulate 1: Black residents engaged in spiritual and physical occupations separate from their neighborhoods, which negatively impacted the economic viability of these neighborhoods that we still see today.
- Postulate 2: Occupations for residents in redlined KY neighborhoods today, such as walking, healthy food participation, internet utilization, educational opportunities, and access to health resources, are significantly lacking.
- Postulate 3: There is a correlation between occupational participation and health and well-being for residents of redlined KY neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Adult learning theorists propose that “the learning process itself is less a focus than the economic, historical, and sociocultural context in which the learning takes place” (Merriam and Baumgartner, 2020, p. 290). Redlining resulted in cutting off investment to neighborhoods

deemed economically high risk based on residents' race. Everyday activities people do as individuals, in families, and with communities to occupy time bring meaning and purpose to life. The authors believe that a historical rendering of redlining may help shed light on the importance of occupations for adult learning.

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Malcolm Knowles Awardee 2023, the Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP): Artificial Intelligence and Human Perspectives on Our Story

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Abstract: The Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP) being named the recipient of the Malcolm Knowles Award prompts retrospection and raises the question of what to present at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) conference. What is the overarching narrative of CLASP? Given the international and intergenerational nature of the program, anecdotes abound—stories of transformation, rich relationships, and shared achievements; but what is the “metastory”? An unfinished, in-house film made years ago wherein program participants and observers spoke freely on camera may serve. From a detached perspective, we turn to artificial intelligence in the form of a qualitative data analytics program. This paper reports the results of that media analysis and conference attendees’ reactions to the film.

Keywords: learning partnerships, undergraduate andragogues, media analysis, qualitative data analytics, artificial intelligence

Author’s Note

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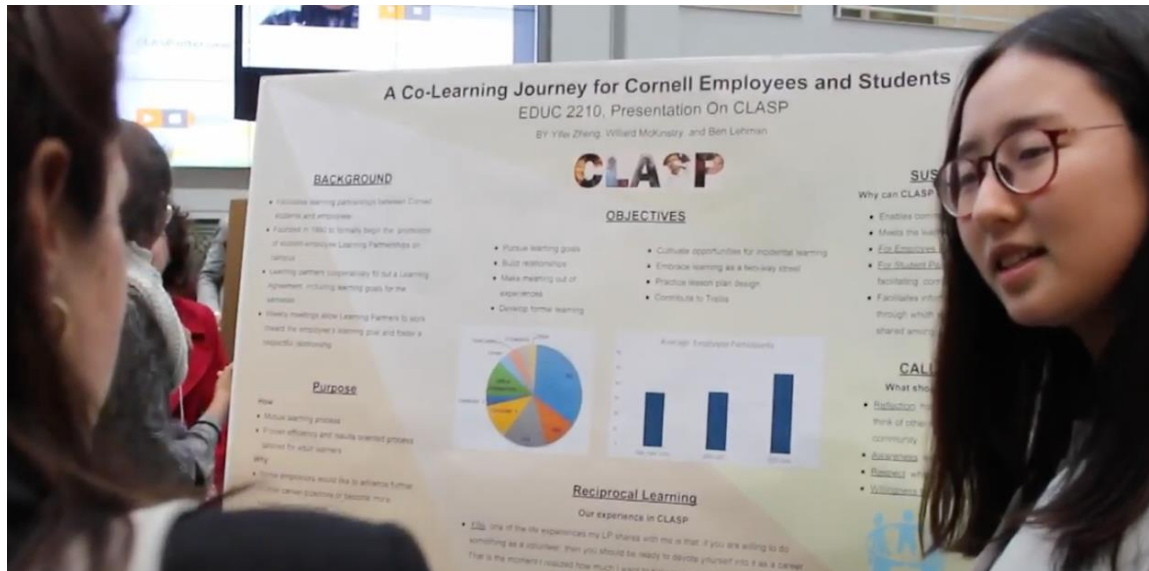
Background

The undergraduate minor in education is quite popular at Cornell, a university now without an education department. Admissions staff tell us they receive many inquiries about the education minor from potential students considering Cornell University. I (Raymer) lead the minor’s andragogy curriculum and direct the Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP) adult learning program.

The CLASP team matches campus staff members, primarily UAW Local 2300 service employees, with students enrolled in our adult learning courses. This unique partnership pairs one student with one employee, focusing on the employee’s learning goal. Students utilize their knowledge of andragogical practices to mentor adult learners, while employees gain a supportive colleague to help them pursue their educational goals, usually of their choosing. Through these partnerships, students learn from the wisdom and experience of adults, and employees gain a dedicated mentor and ally. Both partners grow individually and together, gaining new perspectives on the campus community and the world at large. Participating in CLASP significantly changes knowledge, confidence, life circumstances, and career paths for both employees and students. As many Cornell students go on to influential positions after graduation, it is vital that their current and future decision-making is informed by an understanding and appreciation of the lives and experiences of those who are often underrepresented. Since our university does not have an education major, students from all disciplines and fields are drawn to

our andragogy courses, and our diverse class composition affords excellent opportunities to apply adult learning principles and practices in varied contexts and settings. This provides many avenues for students to discover the relevance and elegant utility of andragogy for relational learning and humane education. In this paper, we invite others' perspectives, both AI and human, on one homegrown media project to discover what it conveys about the program and learn what it does not impart.

Figure 1
CLASP Student Learning Partner Presenting Poster at Engaged Learning Festival (screenshot)



Reciprocal relationships are the heart of CLASP. Many participating adults are first- or second-generation immigrants, and many Cornell students in education courses are international students. While most of our andragogy courses are offered at the undergraduate level, we also welcome graduate students and staff members on a space-available basis. For adults, our primary commitment is to service employees, yet we also accept applications from professionals and faculty adult learners, as well as adults from the local community. In addition to English language acquisition, the most commonly requested areas of study among CLASP participants include computer skills, career development, preparation for vocational certifications, and non-English language study, such as American Sign Language. We have a diverse range of adult and international learners engaged in the student-employee partnerships. Therefore, our academic courses incorporate soft skills, intercultural communication, and relational learning. For CLASP employees/adults, we offer optional orientations to adult learning to provide them with some of the same material the students study. This is a first step to setting the tone for a learning environment of mutual respect and co-learning between students and adults.

In addition to myself (Raymer), the CLASP team includes two part-time colleagues: SE, the program liaison, and BK, the program manager. One of SE's primary responsibilities is to pair employees and students. SE also teaches a course for students interested in partnering with adults wanting to gain English language proficiency, *Adult language learners and marginalization: Applied teaching methods for empowerment*. I (Raymer) teach three courses: a) *Introduction to adult learning*; b) *Design and facilitation of learning for development*; and one graduate course, c) *Lifelong learning, just sustainability and learning cities/localities*.

Additionally, both instructors periodically offer special topic courses. For each student enrolled in our andragogical courses, the fieldwork consists of serving as an educational mentor to an adult learner.

Approach

What to present at AAACE in a short session to communicate a sense of the human side of relational learning? CLASP has a video, an in-house production created by former CLASP-ian Dave Nelson, with students, adult learners, union leaders, and employee managers. I contacted Nelson, now a Resiliency Coordinator at Biddeford High School in Maine, to see what he remembered about making the film. Nelson replied:

One of the things that has stuck with me, and that I tried to convey in the video, is the element of mutual learning that Professor Raymer stresses in her classes. The program is not about college students teaching service workers—it's about students and employees coming together to learn from each other. I found everyone I filmed had either absorbed this idea from Professor Raymer or realized it on their own through their learning partnerships. What surprised me most in interviewing both students and employees, however, was the *emotional impact* of CLASP. I remember one employee saying that his learning partner was like a son to him, and others met beyond their scheduled hours and continued meetings after the course ended. For many, the learning partnerships gave them a sense of empowerment, both from the learning and the personal connections. For everyone I spoke with, including supervisors of the employees, the experience was overwhelmingly positive. (Nelson, D., personal communication, Oct. 23. 2023)

Before showing the film to colleagues at AAACE, we wanted to gain a third party's perspective on the film, as we felt too close to the program portrayed to perceive the picture clearly. We considered the possibility of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools. After researching several AI utilities, we identified one for which we could find no reports of the problems commonly associated with AI, such as bias and 'hallucinations'—i.e., inventing content (Hatem et al., 2023; Jordan, 2019; Ntoutsis et al., 2020; Tsamados et al., 2022). In fact, very little has been written about the qualitative data analytics program Ailyze (<https://www.ailyze.com>); we learned of it through colleagues in evaluation who lauded the tool. The free version, Ailyze Lite, offers different options for summation, content analysis, question application, synopsis, and thematic analysis, while the professional version additionally offers outcome harvesting and comparative qualitative analysis. We opted for the free version and ran two types of analysis.

A short introductory video about the program is available on the CLASP website: <https://cals.cornell.edu/global-development/our-work/our-initiatives/community-learning-and-service-partnership>. This film, also made by Nelson, is in a finished form and runs just under five minutes. Another extended version is not quite as polished, and no changes have been made since Nelson left for Maine five years ago. As we would like to use this media as the basis for a more comprehensive introduction to the program, it is this version that we selected for analysis.

Results

The unfinished film was screened at the AAACE annual conference held in Lexington, KY, in 2023.

Those speaking in the film included program participants and observers in four roles:

1. **Administrators/Managers**—people in positions to encourage employees to take part in CLASP.
2. **Employees/Adult Learners**—Primarily unionized members in the services fields of building care, dining, and hospitality.
3. **Union Leaders**—Staff members of UAW Local 2300, the union of Cornell service workers, along with other members in local libraries, transportation, and water plants.
4. **Students** (and others taking andragogical courses at Cornell)—While we refer to everyone in CLASP-affiliated courses as “students,” some of the people who populate our academic courses are graduate students, staff members, and faculty colleagues.

Figure 2

Adult Learning Partner, Human Resources Leader, UAW Leader, Student Learning Partner (screenshot)



The transcript of the film was uploaded into Allyze. The first analysis prompt given to Allyze was to “summarize the perspectives of each group of participants.” Quoting the Allyze output, here are the results:

Group 1, consisting of administrators Steve, Murray, and Tony, expressed their positive views on the CLASP program. They highlight the benefits of the program for both staff and students. Supervisor Murray emphasizes the passion and impact that the program has

on both staff and students. Supervisor Tony believes that the program helps people feel better about themselves and allows them to apply their potential. Cornell Human Resources Steve appreciates the dedication and enthusiasm that participants bring to the program.

Group 2, represented by UAW leaders Jason and Chris, also expressed their support for the CLASP program. They emphasize the importance of the program for individuals and the broader Cornell community. UAW Local 2300 Leader Jason believes that the program benefits everyone involved, including Cornell and the students. Chris highlights the program's role in breaking systemic oppression and enabling students to become allies.

Group 3, comprising employees Don, Daniel, Alita, Donna, Leila, and Travis, share their personal experiences and the positive impact of the CLASP program on their learning and personal growth. Employee Don reflects on the humbling experience of being taught by a younger student and the value of continuous learning. Employee Alita initially felt hesitant but found the program encouraging and has since inspired her coworkers to participate. Employee Donna expresses her enthusiasm for learning and how the program has helped her acquire new skills. Employee Leila discusses her struggles with traditional learning methods and how the CLASP program provided a more effective approach.

Group 4, represented by students Sidney, Asher, Ellery, Jules, Kiana, Alicia, Michèle, Saaj, Chase, and Sebastian, highlight the transformative experiences they had through the CLASP program. They emphasize the personal connections and friendships formed with their learning partners. The students appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other and gain insights into different walks of life. They also mention the importance of tailoring lessons to their learning partners' interests and needs. The students express gratitude for the program's impact on their personal and academic growth. (Allyze, personal communication, October 21, 2023)

Next, the transcript was uploaded again into Allyze and with the instruction to conduct a thematic analysis. This time Allyze identified eight prominent themes: 1) motivation; 2) engagement; 3) language learning and cultural exchange; 4) personal growth and confidence building; 5) teaching and learning strategies; 6) mutual learning and personal connection; 7) impact and benefits; and 8) lifelong learning. In short, a machine data analytics tool, one so far without reports of the problems often associated with artificial intelligence tools, rendered what a human might consider to be confirmation of the program's aims. How would the expert educators attending the AAACE conference respond to the film?

Discussion

The goal of showing the longer film was not only to inform colleagues about the program but also, with the thought of possibly refining and polishing the video to elicit their constructive feedback. In particular, we wanted to know: 1) their impressions of the program; 2) whether they saw any instance of portraying the adult learners in a patronizing manner, and 3) did they find any elements of the film confusing, unclear, or missing?

The AAACE members who viewed the film at the 2023 annual conference in Lexington were forthcoming and animated. Regarding reactions to the program, one aspect that seemed to make quite an impression was that the student learning partners were primarily undergraduates and, given that there is no such degree here, none were education majors. One person stated that she could imagine graduate students serving as educational mentors of adults, but she was quite surprised to hear undergraduates speaking so articulately about adult learning. A number of people remarked on the high regard students and employee learning partners had for one another, as well as the enthusiastic support of CLASP of both union leaders and employee managers. One person noted that it was great to see the university really promoting a culture of learning for everyone on campus. Regarding whether or not any of the adult learners were portrayed in a disrespectful manner, no one at the screening saw any suggestion of condescension.

With respect to what was missing, unclear, or confusing, the participants offered great, specific, and constructive feedback. A few people said the film needed to introduce and describe the learning partnerships earlier; one added that she did not figure out what we meant by the term until halfway through the movie. Another said that we needed to add brief descriptions of the courses affiliated with CLASP. Someone suggested adding a little of the history of the program, its evolution, and its somewhat unusual harmonic stakeholder composition of union, human resources, and academics. Another person remarked on the variety of majors of the undergraduate students involved in CLASP, and all affirmed that the program was an apt recipient of the Malcolm Knowles Award for andragogical process.

With adult education's emphasis on values such as social justice, community, and respect for individuals, some may be a bit wary of artificial intelligence (Tyson & Kikuchi, 2023). Yet, as we see our students employing AI in undeniably creative ways with their adult learners, perhaps the time has come for educators to give it a try (Yang et al., 2021). At least as employed in this case, it seems artificial and human intelligence would agree on the determination Allyze reached in concluding its' media analysis of the film:

In summary, the administrators, UAW leaders, employees, and students all express positive perspectives on the CLASP program. They highlight the program's benefits in terms of personal growth, learning, and building connections within the Cornell community. The program is seen as a valuable opportunity for both staff and students to learn from each other and develop new skills (Allyze, personal communication, October 21, 2023).

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Creating Connections: The Importance and Impact of Mentoring Students

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Abstract: Mentors are essential for student success. In these challenging and dynamic times in education and society, having mentors to provide support is of even greater importance. This paper shares information about mentoring initiatives for female undergraduate students pursuing a baccalaureate degree in construction management program at a four-year institution. Strategies for involving industry partners and alumni in mentoring initiatives, lessons learned, and plans for the future are highlighted.

Keywords: mentoring, mentoring initiatives, college-to-career transition, underrepresented student populations

Mentors provide helpful feedback and guidance, can help increase one's professional network, and can help overcome challenges at work. Mentors share their professional experience and knowledge and can provide a support system for students. In addition, mentors can help with career development and positively impact one's career path. Higher education institutions can help students connect with mentors to provide additional support through their academic studies and, ultimately, their professional careers. This paper provides an overview of mentoring initiatives for female undergraduate students pursuing a baccalaureate degree in construction management program at a four-year institution. Strategies for involving industry partners and alumni in mentoring initiatives, lessons learned, and plans for the future will also be discussed.

Background

Mentors are important for student and professional success. However, what is a mentor? No one standard definition for the term exists. Kram (1988) found that the word mentor could have different meanings for different people. Steinmann (2023) defines mentoring as an ongoing relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Haggard et al. (2010) reviewed the definitions of the term mentor in nearly 120 academic research articles and found nearly 40 definitions used over an almost 30-year time span. The American Psychological Association (2012) defines a mentor as someone with expertise who can help develop their mentee's career. The definition further describes that mentors have two functions: a career-related function to provide advice on professional performance and development and a psychosocial function to serve as a role model and support system. Additionally, mentors act as a resource to mentees and support them in building self-esteem and confidence (Stapley et al., 2022). A mentor could be a colleague, a friend, a coach, a supervisor, or an advisor.

Mentors help mentees gain new skills, be more effective in their careers, increase confidence, and help with overall career growth (Association for Talent Development, 2023). The benefits of mentoring relationships have been recognized, for mentors provide their knowledge and support to facilitate growth in mentees (Sosik & Gottschalk, 2000). Benefits for mentors include seeing others develop personally and professionally, expanding their viewpoints

and perspectives, developing new technical and soft skills, and gaining new ideas and insights (Association for Talent Development, 2023). Rubbi et al. (2023) found that open communication, personal attributes, and commitment played a critical role in mentors' and mentees' experiencing a positive mentor relationship.

Though the benefits of mentors are documented for all individuals, mentors are especially important for females working in male-dominated industries, such as the construction industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), one in ten construction workers is female. Elliot et al. (2011) describe that formal mentoring is essential for women to overcome gendered barriers. However, male-dominated careers, such as those in the construction industry, have a shortage of female mentors available in the United States, and women in these industries are less likely than men to obtain mentoring relationships (Ragins, 1989). Though mentoring is essential for women's career success, women struggle to find mentors to help their career development (Elliott et al., 2011). Mentoring initiatives for women in male-dominated industries are a strategy to help individuals feel supported in the workplace and help with their personal and professional development.

One strategy to help prepare students to find mentors and understand the importance of mentorship is establishing mentoring initiatives in an academic curriculum. Educational institutions prepare students to enter the workforce, and mentors have been shown to positively impact career development and success. Helping students find mentors and developing mentor relationships while still in college helps them to develop an additional support network before entering the professional workplace. Having established relationships with mentors will hopefully prepare students for success in their professional careers.

Methodology

This paper discusses the mentoring initiatives developed by an undergraduate construction management program. The author of this paper assisted in creating these initiatives and is the current coordinator of the program. A case study approach was utilized to explore these mentoring initiatives. According to Creswell (2014), case study research is an approach in which a researcher explores a case or several cases over time through data collecting. The researcher then reports a case description and case-based themes. In a case study, the research focuses on a bounded unit of analysis (Merriam, 1998). Patton (1980) describes that the unit of analysis also called the case, can be a person, a program, an organization, a group, an event, or a concept. In this paper, the unit of analysis was the mentoring initiatives developed by an undergraduate construction management program at a higher education institution.

Example of Mentoring Initiatives

The importance and value of mentors for females working in the construction industry are well documented (Elliott et al., 2011). The mentoring initiatives highlighted in this paper were established for female undergraduate students pursuing a baccalaureate degree in construction management at a four-year institution, Ball State University, in Muncie, Indiana. The mentoring initiatives were developed to help female undergraduate students build a sense of community and establish connections with other females who will work in the construction industry. The mentoring initiatives include an alumni mentoring program and monthly social events. The alumni mentoring program was the first initiative established in 2013. This program connected current undergraduate female students with female alumnae of the construction

management program. This mentoring program was entirely voluntary, and current students in the program were not required to participate. The alumnae mentors were recruited by faculty in the construction management program. Students and mentors were matched based on similarities in personality, extracurricular activities, and career interests. Mentors and mentees were initially introduced via email by the construction management faculty coordinating the mentor program. The expectation for the mentors and the mentees was to have at least one phone conversation and two email conversations each month. The mentee was expected to initiate all of the communications. Though initial interest in the alumni mentoring program was strong among current students and alumni, tracking and maintaining the connections was challenging. Over time, without a dedicated effort to continue communication, many of these mentoring relationships lapsed.

Based on the initial interest and success of the alumni mentoring program, a new mentoring initiative was developed in 2015 to form mentoring connections between current students in the construction management program. This initiative included monthly social events, such as CM (Construction Management) Ladies' Events, for all female students enrolled in the construction management program. These events aimed to build a sense of community for current students in the program and help form mentor connections between underclassmen and upperclassmen female students. These programs included eating lunch or dinner, making crafts, playing board games, meeting with program alumnae, volunteering in the local community, participating in escape rooms, and painting pottery. These events were promoted primarily via email and word of mouth between the students, and all current female construction management students were invited to attend. The construction management industry advisory board provided funding to support these events. Though the cost for each event varied, the proposed budget was approximately \$10 per student for each event.

Initially, the two female construction management faculty selected the activities and dates for these events. Beginning in 2019, two female upperclassmen students who regularly attended these events were selected to coordinate these activities. Allowing upperclassmen students to coordinate these events increased student participation and gave the student leaders a sense of ownership. Each month, the two student leaders selected an activity and met with the faculty advisor to approve that idea. The faculty advisor purchased any required supplies for the event and developed and distributed all formal marketing materials. The student leaders helped with setting up and cleaning for the events and promoting the events to students. Based on record attendance, the most popular events were painting pottery at a local pottery studio, making cutting boards, and participating in a coffee and canvas painting event with a local artist. All of the monthly events have strong attendance, and informal feedback from students is consistently positive.

Involving Alumni and Industry Partners

One strategy to involve alumni and industry partners was to recruit them to serve as mentors. The alumni mentoring program directly engaged female alumnae. The faculty advisor, who has been a part of the construction management program since 2007, has consistently maintained communication with alumni. Those relationships have been instrumental in locating volunteers for the alumni mentoring program.

A second strategy is to involve alums and industry partners as guest speakers. Some of these individuals could not commit to serving as mentors but wanted to be engaged in these initiatives in some manner. Guest speakers participated in the monthly social events and shared experiences from their professional careers. Often, these guest speakers were alumna of the

program who had participated in the monthly CM Ladies Events and had positive memories of those experiences. These alumnae wanted to give back to their alma mater and their academic program by supporting part of the next generation of construction professionals.

Another strategy to engage alumni and industry partners was to seek financial support to bolster mentoring initiatives. Though these initiatives did not always have an associated cost, having financial resources can help strengthen activities by providing refreshments for a social activity or purchasing materials for a monthly event. The industry advisory board of the academic program in this article was the primary financial supporter of the described mentoring initiatives. For specific programming, such as the CM Ladies Events, other industry partners served as event sponsors and provided funding. That funding covered all event costs, and representatives from that organization had the opportunity to participate. That participation provided the opportunity for industry partners to share information about their companies, recruit potential internship and full-time candidates, increase their company presence on campus, and for those individuals to share stories from their professional experiences.

Lessons Learned

The primary lesson learned from the mentoring initiatives discussed in this study involved upperclassmen students in the planning and implementation. The average attendance at events significantly increased once these student leaders selected activities, coordinated dates, and helped with communication and marketing. Having student leaders provided a sense of ownership in these initiatives. Though the faculty advisor was actively involved in all decisions, having student-driven initiatives increased participation and made events more successful and effective.

An additional lesson learned was the importance of relationships with industry partners and alumni. Though these mentoring initiatives did not require large amounts of money, and some, such as the alumni mentoring program, require no funding, having industry partners and alumni willing to support these initiatives financially helped strengthen the programming. Financial support from this academic program's industry advisory board initially funded these mentoring initiatives. Support from alumni in the form of guest speakers for monthly events or serving as mentors also strengthened these initiatives. Current students benefit from seeing female graduates working as successful professionals in the industry.

The final lesson learned was the importance of flexibility monitoring and adjusting, which is critical when developing student initiative. The monthly social events evolved based on funding, the number of eligible and participating students, students' interests and ideas, and other factors. Adapting to accommodate the ever-changing student population was essential to ensure mentoring initiatives met student needs and helped prepare them for career and life success.

Plans for the Future

In the future, the monthly social events for female students will continue. These events have been well attended, and informal feedback from students who attend these events has been positive. Plans for the future include increasing student participation in these events, increasing alumni and industry support, and expanding the reach of the mentoring initiatives. One strategy to increase participation is to develop targeted outreach to engage female freshmen students in these events earlier in their academic careers. Engaging these students earlier will help them connect with other female students and establish potential mentoring relationships. A strategy to increase

alumni and industry support involves more female alumnae participating in these events as students. These alumnae are familiar with these mentoring initiatives and, as professionals, have new insights and perspectives to share about being a female working in the construction industry. This would also allow these alumnae to stay connected with the construction management program and could lead to additional future involvement or support. A strategy to expand the reach of these mentoring initiatives is to develop programming for other underrepresented student populations in this academic program. Creating and implementing new mentoring initiatives would help increase the sense of community and provide increased support for additional students.

Recommendations for Developing Mentoring Initiatives

One recommendation for developing mentoring initiatives is to identify key stakeholders and partners. In addition to serving as mentors, these partners can potentially provide funding, training and development programming, networking connections, and employment opportunities. These partnerships can aid in the short and long-term success of mentoring initiatives. Another recommendation for developing mentoring initiatives is to involve mentees in planning these programs. From helping brainstorm activities to identifying times and formats that work best to recruiting other individuals to be involved, the mentees in the initiatives highlighted in this paper have aided in developing and growing these programs.

A final recommendation for developing mentoring initiatives is to be prepared to adapt and adjust to address the needs of both mentees and mentors. From incorporating new programming formats to adapting to the global COVID-19 pandemic to including participants in the planning process, the initiatives in this paper have changed over time and will continue to evolve. There is no one-size-fits-all for mentoring initiatives. Individuals who coordinate mentoring initiatives must be prepared to monitor and adjust to ensure that these programs meet the needs of the mentees and the mentors.

Conclusion

Mentors are important for student success. The examples of mentoring initiatives shared in this article are strategies an academic program can create to help students find mentors, build a sense of community, and increase personal and professional support levels. Mentoring initiatives are one strategy higher education institutions can utilize to help students be successful during their academic careers and ultimately help them to thrive in their professional careers.

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Graduate Assistants' Self-formation to Transformation: A Positioning Theory Perspective

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Abstract: This paper, grounded in Positioning Theory (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999), investigates the intricate journey of graduate assistants from self-formation to transformation. Through examining the pivotal themes of social interaction, dynamic roles, workplace culture, and professional development, the paper reveals a nuanced interplay of factors shaping graduate assistant experiences. The major themes collectively contribute to understanding the multifaceted nature of graduate assistant experiences, thereby advancing scholarly discourse and guiding future research.

Keywords: positioning theory, graduate assistants (GAs), professional development, identity formation

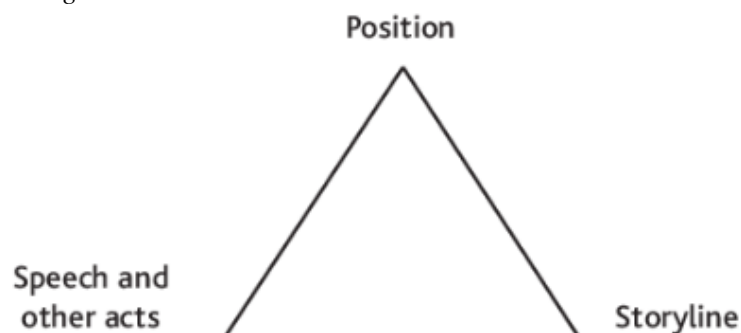
Research on Graduate Assistants (GAs) has unveiled a complex interplay of factors influencing their experiences (Jung, 2021; Offstein et al., 2004; Wu, 2021). Rooted in *Positioning Theory* (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999), this paper explores the transformative journey of GAs from self-formation to transformation. It begins by examining the pivotal role of social interaction in mentorship and highlighting the fluid construction of identities. The focus then shifts to dynamic roles, workplace culture nuances, and the interplay of enabling and constraining factors, emphasizing the transformative impact of professional development. This paper aims to comprehensively explore the challenges, dynamics, and transformations within the context of graduate assistantships. It provides insights for adult educators, higher education leaders, and policymakers to conceptualize graduate assistants' experience and the role of agency in their self-exploration, self-positioning, and professional transition.

Background

One of society's basic functions is to stimulate and contain the possibilities of human agency (Van Langenhove, 2021). *Positioning Theory* (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) stresses that understanding what people do and don't do depends on the positions people take in that order. Positions, speech acts, and storylines constitute the "mutually determining triad" (p.17) within the framework of *Positioning Theory* (see Figure 1). Positions refer to groups of shared norms that all participants in a particular interaction context agree upon (Moghaddam & Harre, 2008). Speech acts cover the actions during interpersonal exchanges (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). Storylines indicate a combination of narrative conventions (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003).

In the context of graduate assistants' experiences, these components play a crucial role in shaping their self-formation and learning transformation. For example, positions, as clusters of acknowledged norms, influence how graduate assistants position themselves within their academic roles and social interactions. The concept of speech acts, involving the performances during interpersonal exchanges, reflects how communication and engagement contribute to constructing identities and roles. Additionally, storylines, representing flexible narrative conventions, contribute to the narrative construction of the graduate assistants' experiences, emphasizing their journey's dynamic and evolving nature. Together, these components provide a framework for understanding the complexities of graduate assistants' experience as student-workers, influencing their self-formation and transformation throughout their academic journey.

Figure 1
Positioning triangle



Note: adapted from Harré & Van Langenhove (1999, p.18).

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Methodology

Scholars have extensively utilized *Positioning Theory* to delve into various aspects of identity construction. For instance, van Langenhove & Harré (1999) examined how stereotypes are (re)produced and maintained, while Berman (1999) focused on the formation and maintenance of national identities. Moreover, researchers have applied *Positioning Theory* to explore the formation of professional identities among English as a Foreign Language teachers (Eslamdoost et al., 2020), the construction of identity in religious and spiritual meaning-making processes (Schwab, 2013), as well as veterans' experiences (Laskey & Stirling, 2020).

This literature review utilizes *Positioning Theory* as a framework to examine how graduate assistants construct their identities and roles through social interactions. It focuses on their self-formation within the context of higher education, examining key concepts manifested in their experiences. This approach offers a dynamic and nuanced perspective on how graduate assistants navigate the complex landscape of higher education, including their roles, identities, and professional development. By employing *Positioning Theory* as a tool for understanding “strategic interactional moves” (Ribeiro, 2006, p. 49), this review aims to “capture the ways people locate themselves and others onto a map of social realities” (Lee, 2018, p. 421). This draws attention to the notion of graduate assistants’ “self” as an individual’s constant negotiation of their sense of personhood in which a “multiplicities of self” exists” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 47).

Literature Review

To comprehensively explore the challenges, dynamics, and transformations within graduate assistantships, a 20-year search range from 2000 to 2023 is utilized in this literature review. This extending search range allows for a comprehensive analysis of historical trends, longer-term impacts of interventions, identification of emerging trends, integration of interdisciplinary perspectives, and a more thorough

understanding of educational practices and policies, providing valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. Keywords such as graduate assistants, graduate research assistants, graduate teaching assistants, GRA, GTA, experience, perspective, and challenge are employed to systematically execute the search within peer-reviewed academic journals, specifically utilizing the EBSCO Database. This comprehensive strategy aims to capture and analyze current trends and insights in the research landscape related to graduate assistants' experience and self-formation. Examining peer-reviewed journals through the positioning framework offers a unique lens to comprehend the self-formation and transformation within graduate assistantships.

As a unique population with multiple roles, graduate assistants may encounter more challenges related to time, expectations, and role conflicts (Quinn, 2011; Smith et al., 2018). The challenges underscore the complexities that graduate assistants encounter as they strive to harmonize their various roles and responsibilities within their academic and personal lives. More and more graduate students are expressing elevated levels of anxiety, which affects their mental well-being and contributes to higher attrition rates in graduate programs (Evans et al., 2018; Levecque et al., 2017; Rummell, 2015).

In the academic context, graduate assistants may encounter a spectrum of opportunities and limitations contingent on their position within their academic settings. Numerous studies have explored the significance of a positive workplace climate and supportive relationships with supervisors, exploring the direct impact of these factors on the overall experiences of graduate assistants (Castro et al., 2011; Sturhahn Stratton et al., 2006). Research findings indicate that graduate programs prioritizing the cultivation of personal connections among professors and students, coupled with an emphasis on balancing academic and social dimensions of students' lives, tend to exhibit elevated levels of departmental integration and support (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Earl-Novell, 2006).

Research consistently underscores the significance of robust mentorship and support systems for graduate assistants (Kirk & Lipscombe, 2019; Saudelli & Niemczyk, 2020). Positive mentorship experiences have been shown to significantly impact the academic and professional development of GAs (Barnett, 2008; Jeong et al., 2018; Rose, 2005). However, it is crucial to recognize that not all assistantships provide positive experiences for graduate students (Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013).

Numerous studies have also investigated the experiences of graduate assistants as teachers and the influence of pedagogical training on their effectiveness (Kendall & Schussler, 2012; Kurdziel et al., 2003; Schussler et al., 2015; Jonathan et al., 2019). Throughout their journey, graduate assistants undergo a transformative process where they acquire explicit knowledge and skills and internalize the deeper aspects of their chosen field, shaping their professional identity and contributing to their future roles as professionals.

Major Themes

This analysis has unveiled several significant themes, unraveling the dynamic interplay among social interactions, role dynamics, workplace culture, and professional development. Collectively, these themes form a comprehensive framework, offering insights into the challenges, dynamics, and transformations inherent in the domain of graduate assistantships.

Dynamic Roles and Identities in Social Context

Positioning Theory emphasizes that roles and identities are not fixed but are dynamically constructed and context-dependent. In various social situations or contexts, GAs may adopt diverse roles (e.g., teaching assistant, research assistant) and identities (e.g., student, scholar). The complexities of balancing work, academic pursuits, and personal life are intricately explored within GAs' positions (Hardré & Hackett, 2015). Viewed through the lens of *Positioning Theory*, stress and burnout become a delicate interplay between the positions occupied by GAs and the time constraints imposed by their assistantships, academic responsibilities, and additional administrative tasks (Musgrove et al., 2021).

Workplace Culture as Enabling and Constraining

Positioning extends beyond the mere adoption of roles; it involves understanding how these positions both

enable and constrain actions. How individuals position themselves or are positioned by others creates opportunities for certain actions while simultaneously imposing limitations or constraints on others. This delicate interplay between enabling and constraining factors significantly shapes people's behaviors and choices.

Social Interaction and Positioning in Mentorship

Positioning Theory posits that individuals do not possess fixed or inherent identities but construct them through ongoing social interactions. People actively position themselves and are arranged by others through communication and engagement with the social world. Successful mentoring relationships contribute to the overall development of graduate students (D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; McDonald et al., 2007; Schlee, 2000).

Shifts and Transformations through Professional Development

Positioning Theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of individuals' positions and identities, allowing for shifts and transformations over time. Within the realm of graduate assistantships, profound personal and professional growth can occur, prompting alterations in how individuals position themselves. In this context, the concept of professional development encompasses explicit and implicit learning processes throughout the entire graduate school experience. These processes are inherently social, requiring the assimilation of norms, values, and behaviors associated with a specific profession (Trede et al., 2012; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Discussion

Identity formation can be complex and fluid, shaped by multiple experiences and relationships within specific places and spaces (Holland, 1998). GA experience is a multifaceted and intricate process of learning. Graduate assistants bring diverse identities and experiences as they navigate their graduate studies. As highlighted by Irby et al. (2013), this experience is a “process in which we use prior experiences and interpretations to form new or revised interpretations to make meaning and guide future action” (p. 134). As active learners, individuals engage in the transformative process of developing knowledge by internalizing the social environment (Simpson, 2002; Schunk, 2020). Exploring how graduate assistants navigate the structured environment of assistantships, construct their identities, and negotiate the meaning of their experiences within this framework provides valuable insights. Such examination contributes significantly to the ongoing scholarly discourse, shedding light on the intricate processes involved in the figured world of assistantships. For instance, in advancing mentoring programs, there is a pressing need for additional research to identify the specific elements that foster successful mentoring relationships. Despite some progress in exploring graduate student mental health issues, the understanding of how students cope with various stressors remains in its early stages (Gin et al., 2021). Consequently, higher education institutions must delve into the specific stressors experienced by GAs, their utilization of campus resources, and their overall mental health. Further research in this domain holds the potential for uncovering discoveries and deepening our understanding of the multifaceted nature of the graduate assistantship experience.

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